

# ST. NICHOLAS.

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No. 2.



ON the day before Christmas, or, to be perfectly accurate, at half-past three o'clock on the afternoon of the 24th of December, the Imp was driving through a heavy Vermont blizzard, huddled on the back seat of an old-fashioned sleigh, between his mother and his Aunt Gertrude. Facing them sat his father and his Uncle Stanley; and Joshua Peebles, the driver, was perched upon the raised seat in front.

The Imp was cold and cramped; his mother was cold and frightened; his father was cold and angry. And the horses, to judge from their actions, were cold and tired, for they stopped suddenly in the middle of the whirling flakes and refused to move a step, for all Joshua Peebles's clucking and urging.

"Oh, dear," cried the Imp's mother, "what a dreadful storm! What *shall* we do, Mr. Peebles? Is n't this terrible? How I wish we had stayed at the hotel!"

"Mebbe 't would 'a' been jes' as well if you had," replied Mr. Peebles politely.

"That 's enough of that," said the Imp's

father decidedly. "Do you know where we are at all, Peebles?"

"Well," Mr. Peebles began, "I ain't so sure as I might be, but I *guess* we 're on the road. I guess we 're somewhere, more or less."

The rest of the party, cold and unhappy as they were, laughed at this cautious remark, and the Imp poked his nose out of the bearskin rug to see what had amused them. His sharp little eyes pierced the thick white veil around them, and he cried triumphantly:

"Here we are! Here 's Grandma Stafford's! Let 's get out, quick!"

Joshua Peebles shook his head. "No, sonny, you 're wrong. This ain't your gran'ma's by a good three mile. We ain't near to any place — wish we were. That 's just a snow-bank you see." He stopped suddenly and shaded his eyes with his big red worsted gloves.

"By gracious, it is a house!" he shouted. "It ain't Mis' Stafford's, but it *is* Darius Hobbs's! I did n't know we 'd come so far. Now, look here, folks; I guess you 've had

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enough o' this. You just get out while you can, and go right into Darius's and wait till this lets up. The team can't drag you much further, and that 's a fact. With your weight out, I 'll take 'em on to Mis' Stafford's—it ain't but two miles, and if I get stalled before I get there I can stop off at Deacon Scofield's. She 'll know why you had to wait. What do you say?"

"But I don't see any house," the Imp's father began doubtfully.

Mr. Peebles handed him the reins, jumped down, sank nearly to his waist in snow, and plowed ahead a few yards.

"Here 's the gate!" he called back. "Come in my path before it fills up, an' bring the ladies along. Hurry up, now!"

Almost before they realized how they had come, the little party was standing on the snowy front porch, surrounded by traveling-bags and suit-cases, the Imp congratulating himself publicly on his good eyesight; he was very proud that he had discovered the house first.

"I 'll ring the bell, Mr. Peebles," he said, stamping his feet in imitation of the men, and seizing the white china bell-knob. "Here 's some writing pinned up," he added, pointing to a sheet of paper above it.

Aunt Gertrude stepped forward, shivering, and read the writing aloud.

"Have gone to Cousin Lon's for the day. Will be back to-morrow," she read with chattering teeth.

They stared at one another in consternation.

"Well," cried Mr. Peebles, "if that ain't the greatest! Gone over to 'Lonzo's, have they? Well, they 'll stay there quite a spell, I guess. They 're snowed-up there, jes' as you 're snowed-up here."

Poor little Aunt Gertrude sank down on the white step and choked. She had never been so cold in all her life. The Imp's toes began to ache, and he whined fretfully. Why did n't his father do something?

"Well, what 'll we do, Joshua?" said Uncle Stanley, as cheerfully as though there were a dozen things they *might* do and he were offering the choice.

"Do?" repeated Joshua, "do? Why, just go right in an' make yourselves to home, that's all! Darius and his folks would want ye

to do that. I know where they keep the key," and he reached up behind one of the blinds and took down a big brass door-key.

"Here, Mr. Stafford, here you are. Make a fire and find something to eat, and when this lets up I 'll come and get you. I dares n't leave the team another minute, or they 'll freeze stiff. Good-by!"

They watched him beat a way to the dejected horses, clamber into the sleigh, and shake the reins. The team started up, the bells jingled faintly, he faded into the shifting flakes. Uncle Stanley half lifted Aunt Gertrude to her feet, patted the Imp's heaving shoulder, fitted the key into the lock, and threw open the front door.

"Walk in, my friends, and make yourselves at home," he said politely. "Ring once for ice-water, twice for hot water, and three times for the bell-boy. I regret that the family is, with the exception of myself, over at Cousin 'Lonzo's, but anything that I can do —"

"Oh, Stanley, you are too absurd!" cried Aunt Gertrude; but they all laughed, and then they felt better.

The Imp pranced ahead into the deserted sitting-room, and looked curiously about him. A large, tall stove, with many shining knobs and a little white china bowl on the top, stood well toward the center. The carpet was covered with big wreaths of bright flowers, which he thought cheerful and pretty in the extreme, and there were many interesting pictures on the walls. He was just beginning the careful study of one hanging over the worn haircloth sofa, in which an enormous, long-haired man with a very cross face was engaged in bending two great stone pillars which supported the building he was about to destroy, when his father caught his hand.

"On to the wood-house," he cried, "or your Aunt Gertrude will turn into a yellow-haired icicle with a pink nose!" And he led them through a clean, bare kitchen into a fascinating room full of piled-up logs, little, middle-sized, and big, with all manner of shingles and lightwood besides. He and Uncle Stanley and the Imp carried in armfuls of this, and soon a fire was lighted in the black stove, and they were toasting their toes in a circle around the shining knobs. As the light glimmered red

through the isinglass doors, casting many rosy shadows now on their faces, now on the furniture, and the delicious warmth crept into their cold, tired bodies, a sudden impulse seized the older ones, and they burst into laughter till the room rang with it, the Imp, as was his custom, laughing loudest of all as he sprawled con-

"What is it, mother? Tell me. Is it a joke?"

"A joke?" repeated Uncle Stanley huskily.

"A joke? By all means, my dear child.

I was laughing because your Grandmother Stafford sprained her ankle, and we thought it would be so pleasant to spend Christmas in the country with her and cheer her up!"



"'I 'LL RING THE BELL,' SAID THE IMP, ADDING, 'HERE 'S SOME WRITING PINNED UP!'"

tentedly on a gay rug by the side of his mother's chair, though he had no idea what they all were so merry about. When Aunt Gertrude had finished at last, and his mother had wiped her eyes, the Imp turned to her curiously, and asked confidentially:

"And I," said the Imp's mother, pursing her mouth into a queer little shape, "I was laughing because I packed everybody's presents to everybody else into a fine big box together, so they would be easily got at when we came to grandmother's."

"And I," continued the Imp's father, a little crossly, "I was laughing because I insisted upon storing the box in the hotel barn to save lifting it about—and then the barn burned to the ground."

"And I," Aunt Gertrude concluded, her voice shaking a little, she had laughed so hard, "I was laughing because I teased Brother Donald to let us start from the old hotel, blizzard or no blizzard, till he gave way and let us come—and here we are!"

The Imp stared at them a moment incredulously. Then he shook his head.

"I don't believe you at all!" he declared with decision. "I don't believe a word! There's some other reason!"

And then, because they were the jolliest family in the world, and never gloomy for more than an hour at most, they began to laugh again, and actually laughed away all their misfortunes.

"It's an adventure, a real adventure!" cried the Imp's mother, "and we ought to be delighted with it. We're a house-party for over Christmas, that's what we are!"

"Well, let's inspect the house, then," suggested Uncle Stanley. "Imp, lead the way. Take us to our rooms, please."

The Imp giggled and started up the stairs. Four doors opened on the narrow upper hall, and he peeped into each, waving the rest of the party back till he had made his assignments. After a swift glance into the third room he beckoned Aunt Gertrude to him.

"This is for you, 'cause the looking-glass is full of pictures," he announced.

She entered with much ceremony, and they peered in over her shoulder.

"Yes, this must be the daughter's room," said Mrs. Stafford. "See the ribbons on the curtains, and the little knickknacks."

"This one with the blue quilt is for Uncle Stanley," the Imp called out importantly, "'cause there's skates and a hockey-stick there!"

Uncle Stanley bowed and took possession of his property, and the Imp moved on to the front room.

"This is yours," he said, looking slyly up at his mother, "'cause there's one picture here like my baby picture, and one like when I was three, and one like me with my corduroy trousers!"

His mother leaned down and kissed him. "Yes," she said softly, "this is the mother's room. And where is yours, dear?"

"Mine's this small one in here," said the Imp, "with the two little girls' pictures."

At the head and foot of the cot-bed hung pictures of a little pink-faced girl in a bright blue frock, with a chain of daisies around her neck. Under one was written, "Wide Awake," under the other, "Fast Asleep," and, as Uncle Stanley remarked, there was no doubt that the legends described the young lady correctly.

"There's a door between ours," the Imp added in confidence to his mother, "same as at home. I guess there always is, most us'ally, don't you?" And she agreed with him cordially.

They brought up their bags and unpacked them, so as to spend as little time as possible at night in the cold upper rooms; and then with one consent they fled to the kitchen, where a fire was soon lit, Aunt Gertrude and the Imp's mother smiling and competent in their clean gingham aprons, and his father and Uncle Stanley eagerly stumbling over each other in their well-meant efforts at assistance. They were very hungry, and delighted shouts greeted the frizzling ham and eggs that found its way to the stove, and the good home-made bread and deep pumpkin-pie that came out of the pantry.

"Only we sha'n't have any real Christmas dinner," said Aunt Gertrude, a little sadly, in the midst of all the fun and chatter. Aunt Gertrude always decorated the table on these occasions, and enjoyed her work as much as the praises she won by it.

The Imp's mother looked mysteriously at her, one hand on the brown stoneware teapot.

"I don't know about that; maybe we shall," she announced. "When I went into the cellar for butter I saw—I saw—"

"What? Oh, what?" they cried eagerly, as she paused.

"I saw a big, big turkey, with bowls and bowls of cranberry sauce!"

"Ah!"

"And mince-pies—"

"Ah!"

"And nuts—"



"Ah!"

"And I could make a plum-pudding; I'm sure I could!"

"Say no more," said Uncle Stanley solemnly, "but Gertrude, start the decorated place-cards, with the guests' names!"

"Only, only—" Mrs. Stafford looked doubtfully at her husband, "I'm not sure if it's right, Don dear, to step in so coolly and eat up their nice Christmas dinner. You see, when they started away yesterday morning, it was just the end of the storm, they thought, and they expected to be back. They had no idea it would begin again at noon. And we have n't any right—"

"For that matter, we have n't any right to this ham and that most delectable pie, nor to the feather-beds we shall get into to-night," said the Imp's father cheerfully. "Where do we draw the line? They'll eat their Christmas dinner where they did n't expect to, and if they're nice people they'll be glad that this surprise-party had such a good dinner to eat at their house. I should n't wonder if we could find some way to repay them before we get away."

"Joshua Peebles said to make ourselves to home; he believed Darius's folks would want us to," suggested the Imp helpfully; and that seemed to settle the matter, for they washed the dishes and set the table for breakfast in the best of spirits.

In fact, as they sat about the stove in the sitting-room and laughed till they cried, as they discussed the probable characteristics of the Hobbs family, each one drawing a vivid picture of some member of it, and insisting that he was right and the others wrong if they held different views, they almost forgot that the box was burned, and that something was lacking this Christmas Eve.

Suddenly, however, in the midst of Uncle Stanley's brilliant picture of William Henry Hobbs, whose room he was to occupy, and who, he insisted, had gray eyes and hated baked beans, the Imp heaved a sigh.

"We've none of us got any presents on the tree, have we?" he said softly—"not even one."

"That's a fact, Imp," Uncle Stanley agreed. "It is a pity, too. If I had just one, I would n't mind. Just the idea of the thing, you know."

They looked at one another in silence. Then the four older ones got up from their chairs as one person and ran upstairs. In a few minutes they came down, one by one, and as if they had waited for the coast to clear before they ventured. When they had settled themselves, somewhat consciously, in separate and distant chairs, the Imp's father arose, stepped toward Uncle Stanley with a package in his hand, and remarked:

"My dear Stanley, let me present you with this box of fine cigars, with my compliments and best wishes for the season. They are really too good for you, but Christmas comes but once a year."

Uncle Stanley seized his present with unfeigned delight, even cutting a little caper as he tucked it under his left arm. With his right hand he offered his brother a long, slim object.

"My dear Donald," he replied, "let me, before thanking you for this truly valuable and unexpected (by both of us) present, beg your acceptance of my fountain-pen, for which you have hinted in vain for two years, and which I am certain you have been near stealing before this. A merry Christmas and a happy New Year!"

The Imp's father smiled broadly and grasped the pen eagerly.

"Good enough!" he cried. "I'd rather have this than anything you own, Stan!"

They all laughed with excitement, wondering what would come next, and Aunt Gertrude took the floor.

"Here is my alligator card-case, Stanley," she said, "so you won't need to borrow it any more. Be careful of it, and—merry Christmas!"

"Bless you, Gertrude," returned Uncle Stanley. "I can't go all around, but you'll get your reward sometime, and meanwhile I take great pleasure in presenting you, my dear nephew, with this camera, which is a much larger one than I should ever have purchased for you, and with which I ask only that you'll allow me to get a few of these blizzard scenes."

Speechless with joy, the Imp seized the camera and balanced it in his trembling hands. His cup ran over.

"Gertrude," said Mr. Stafford, "I believe



"SPEECHLESS WITH JOY, THE IMP SEIZED THE CAMERA AND BALANCED IT IN HIS TREMBLING HANDS." (SEE PAGE 103.)

you have often remarked that these sleeve-links matched your belt-buckle. Let me offer them to you, with the compliments of the season!"

"Oh, brother Don! They are too lovely!" sighed Aunt Gertrude, flushing with pleasure. "Helen, dear, this is only my 'party' handkerchief, but you always said it was the prettiest one you ever saw"; and she laid it in her sister's lap.

Mrs. Stafford drew two fat, square boxes from behind her back and extended her hands to the Imp's father and Uncle Stanley.

"Here, you two babies," she said, "let me pat my lovely handkerchief, and take this old-fashioned molasses, Don; yours are burnt almonds, Stanley!"

The Imp interrupted their thanks. "Everybody's given something to everybody else but just excepting me," he said sorrowfully, "and I have n't a single present, 'cause all my things were packed in mother's bag, and it's only clothes and cough med'cine, anyway—you would n't want 'em. But I'm going to give something to somebody, just the same. I'm going to give my 'Sports of All Nations' puzzle to little Hezekiah Greenleaf Hobbs, that sleeps in my little room!"

They looked at one another silently. "It's the best present that's been made to-night, Perry boy," said his father, "and I'm going to leave my 'Kidnapped' and 'Treasure Island' here for Mr. Hobbs. I see he's a reading man by the books on the table, and I'll read something else at grandmother's."

"I'll put my new blue satin stock in the bureau drawer when I go," said Aunt Gertrude, after a moment.

"And I'll give William Henry my club-skates that I brought up," added Uncle Stanley; "his are clumsy, old-fashioned things."

The Imp's mother hugged him and smiled on them all.

"Is n't this fun?" she asked them delightfully. "Won't they be surprised? I shall leave my new bedroom slippers for Mrs. Hobbs; I noticed hers, and they're about worn out. I'm so glad I had big bows put on, and saved them." They're just her size. And we must write them a letter, and tell them what a good, good time we had, must n't we?"

They trooped upstairs with their presents, the Imp assuring any one who cared to listen that no Christmas he had ever known could compare in brilliancy and bliss with this one; but as they all were telling one another the same thing, it is to be doubted if anybody heard him.

Christmas morning, after breakfast, they sat quietly about the stove, while the Imp's father read to them out of a big calf-bound Bible about that First Birthday; and the Imp, who had gone out early with the men, through all the sheds and buildings that joined the house to the barn, to find something for the chickens and cows and horses to eat,—his father, who had been a boy on a farm, had thought of that,—remembered the dimness of the big barn, and the warm, moist smell of the stable, and wove it into the story till he seemed to see it all. Then they went into the parlor, and Aunt Gertrude sat down in front of the melodeon in the corner, and they sang "It Came upon the Midnight Clear," which was the Imp's favorite hymn, as it is that of many people, and which he shouted so lustily as to shake the glass prisms on the candelabra beside him.

And the dinner! His mother rolled up her sleeves and made a pudding of puddings,—she seemed to find the spices by instinct,—while Aunt Gertrude set the table, and trimmed it with cranberry strings and evergreen sprigs that Uncle Stanley pulled off, leaning out of an attic window. The farm-house cellar was a cave of treasures. "They seem to know just what we like," the Imp remarked, as they cracked the butternuts on a flat-iron and selected the celery. There was food and fuel enough to stand a siege, as his father said, and they watched the steady fall of the flakes with more interest than dismay.

When the turkey smoked in the oven, they put on the best their traveling-bags afforded, and sat merrily down around the red and green table. Never, never were dishes so delicious.

"You must really cook your Christmas dinner to appreciate it," said Uncle Stanley, who had done little but pound his finger on the flat-iron and steal the celery hearts.

Later they drank toasts in black coffee to the Hobbs family, collectively and individually,

and made plans for inviting them to their next Christmas at grandmother's.

"For I 'm sure they 're nice, nice people," said the Imp's mother.

And after dinner they popped corn in the stove, and told stories, and played the most delightful games, of which they knew more than any other family in the world, and altogether so enjoyed themselves that not till a thundering knock at the door sent them to the windows did they realize that the storm had stopped.

Joshua Peebles stared in at the corn-popper, the candy, and the merry, brightly dressed ladies.

"Well, well," he said, "I guess you ain't so bad off, after all! You seem to keep your spirits up. I keep the snow-plow up to my place, an' the minute it stopped, I started out. So you can get up to ol' Mis' Stafford's right

away. I passed by 'Lonzo Dearborn's place, and yelled out to 'em that you was here, an' they yelled back they hoped you 'd found the turkey. They wanted you should have everything just 's if you was in your own home."

"There!" cried the Imp's mother, "I said they were nice, nice people!"

"An' so they are," said Joshua Peebles — "nice as they make 'em! Now come on, and maybe you 'll get a little of your Christmas yet."

"My dear Mr. Peebles," said Uncle Stanley, in his best manner, "we have had more Christmas to the square inch than we have enjoyed for many years. A tree, Mr. Peebles, is for institutions; stockings are for the very young only. For real pleasure all round, let me recommend to you a Christmas on an abandoned farm!"

"Except I 'd like to have seen little Hezekiah Greenleaf Hobbs!" murmured the Imp.



IN NEW AMSTERDAM. AN INVITATION TO THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.



## WINTER IN THE SIERRAS.

BY MARY AUSTIN.

THE pines are black on Sierra's slope,  
And white are the drifted snows;  
The flowers are gone, the buckthorn bare,  
And chilly the north wind blows.  
The pine-boughs creak,  
And the pine-trees speak  
A language the north wind knows.

There 's never a track leads in or out  
Of the cave of the big brown bear;  
The squirrels have hid in their deepest holes,  
And fastened the doors with care.  
The red fox prowls,  
And the lean wolf howls  
As he hunts far down from the lair.

The eagle hangs on the wing all day,  
On the chance of a single kill;  
The little gray hawk hunts far and wide  
Before he can get his fill.  
The snow-wreaths sift,  
And the blown snows drift  
To the canyons deep and still.

BRUCE HORSFALL





## THE PRINCESS LOVELY-LOCKS.

*(A Christmas Fantasy.)*

BY HELEN GRAY CONE.

AT midnight clear, as Bessy dear was nestled  
warm in bed,  
To hear the chimes, the silver chimes, she  
raised her sleepy head;  
And all the troop of pleasant thoughts that  
Christmas always brings  
Came fluttering round her pillow, like a  
flight of elfin wings.

She thought about the Christmas tree that  
was her heart's delight,  
With tapers tall and many a ball of gold  
and silver bright;  
She thought of skates and sugar-plums and  
fairly-books and fun.  
Her drowsy lids began to droop; she heard  
the clock strike one.

Her brother Ted, with curly head, had  
dared to boast and say  
He 'd be the first one out of bed at dawn of  
Christmas Day.  
"But he shall see, aha!" said she; and then,  
"How long it seems!"  
And then—she drifted, drifted down a silver  
tide of dreams.

She was the Princess Lovely-locks; she  
paced a garden fair;  
She pored upon an ancient book, a book  
of magic rare;  
And there, in letters quaint, she read the  
best of all the spells—  
To turn to silver sugar-plums the notes of  
Christmas bells.

Then, pondering o'er that wondrous book,  
she shook her head and sighed  
To think the silver sugar-plums would scat-  
ter far and wide;  
But when she came to turn the leaf, she  
found a spell with power  
To bind the wriggle-giggle elves to serve a  
single hour.

She called the wriggle-giggle elves that frisk  
beneath the moon.  
They rode on furry flittermice, they pranced  
with pointed shoon.  
She sent them to the belfry-tower, while  
folk were sound asleep,  
To catch the silver sugar-plums and pile  
them in a heap.



But ah, the young Prince Curly-pet was listening all the time!

With laughter gay he rushed away, the belfry stair to climb.

He flung the sleepy ringers gold; he locked the door within;

He climbed till he was out of breath, the sugar-plums to win.

But Leafy-ear and Twisty-top, the trickiest of elves,

Could point, with pride, a way outside, by stony knobs and shelves;

And soon the Princess Lovely-locks—most wonderful to see—

Went leaping up the belfry like a squirrel up a tree!

She climbed without, and he within, and at the top they met.

"I really meant them half for you!" said young Prince Curly-pet.

The little wriggle-giggle elves were tittering overhead,

And—"Oh, ho, ho! I told you so!" said early, curly Ted.



**REFINE - NOT**

"THINK OF THE BOYS AND GIRLS WHO BORE  
THE QUAIN OLD PIOUS 'NAMES OF GRACE.'"

## LITTLE PURITANS.

BY ETHEL PARTON.

CALL the roll of the long ago,  
Boys and girls of our brisk to-day;  
Faintly still to harkening ears  
Floats an echo across the years  
Of other children's play.

Think of the boys and girls who bore  
The quaint old pious "names of grace":  
Weighted down with those wondrous names,  
Strange that they still could play at games  
And laugh and leap and race!

Calm *Consider* and placid *Peace*  
With smiling *Silence* shy and sweet,  
*Mercy* and *Love* and *Charity*,  
*Obedience*, *Humility*,  
*Meek*, *Modest*, and *Discreet*,

Frank-eyed *Righteous* and blithe *Rejoice*,  
Dimpled *Plenty* and pale *Decline*,  
*Welcome* and *Thankful*, *Gift*, their mate,  
Eager *Willing* and sober *Wait*,  
*Repine-not*, and *Resign*,

With *Magnify* and *Sin-deny*  
And *Hope-on-high* and *Trust*,  
*Zeal-of-the-land* and *Strive-again*,  
*Hate-evil*, *Cleanse-mine-heart*, *Refrain*,  
*Earth*, *Lowly*, *Ashes*, *Dust*,

*More-trial* and *Deliverance*  
And *Weep-not* and *Content*,  
*Preserved*, *Approved*, *Elected* too,  
*Fight-the-good-fight-of-faith* and *True*-  
*Repentance* and *Lament*,

*Faint-not* and *Wrestle*, *God-reward*,  
*No-merit*, and *Reviled*,  
*Fly-temptation*, *Sorry-for-sin*,  
And *Through-much-tribulation-we-enter-in*-  
*To-the-kingdom-of-heaven*. (Poor child!)

Young folk, catch your breath and laugh  
(As, honoring still, you may)  
At the good, grave folk of the long ago  
Who named their innocent babies so,  
And be thankful for to-day!



BY ADELINE KNAPP.

*The following story is the second of the long stories complete in one number that are to appear in the present volume of ST. NICHOLAS.*

*It is a stirring, romantic tale, interesting to boys and girls alike, and dealing with the time of the robber-barons in Germany, "when the sunlight fell on glancing steel and floating pennon," and when the nobles were absolute lords of their own castles and the regions round about. It was the time of the crusaders, too, and of the outlaw, and of sudden changes in the life of man and boy.*

*We commend the story to all our readers, who, we are sure, will be glad to follow the fortunes of the lad left by the "shining knight" to become the ward of the armorer, and, later,—well, read the story.*

#### CHAPTER I.

##### WHAT THE CHILDREN SAW FROM THE PLAYGROUND ON THE PLATEAU.

ONE sunny forenoon in the month of May, more than six hundred years ago, a few boys and girls were playing under some gnarled, low trees that clustered in small groups here and there in a pleasant meadow on a high plateau. This meadow was part of a great table-land overlooking a wide stretch of country. The south side descended in a steep cliff, and up and down its slope the huts of a little village seemed to climb along the stony path that led to the plateau. Farther away lines of dark forest

stretched off out of sight. On all sides were mountains, covered with trees or crowned with snow, from which, when the sun went down, the wind blew chill. Beyond the stream a highway climbed the valley, and the children could see, from their playground, the place where it issued from the edge of the wood and wound through a narrow pass among the hills.

Toward the north, and far overhead, rose the grim walls and towers of the great castle that watched the pass and sheltered the little village on the cliff-side. Those were rude, stern times, and the people in the village were often glad of the protection which the castle gave from attacks by stranger invaders; but they



paid for their security from time to time when the defenders themselves sallied forth upon the hamlet and took toll from its flocks and herds.

It was "the evil time when there was no emperor" in Germany. Of real rule there was none in the land, but every man held his life in his own charge. Knights sworn to deeds of mercy and bravery, returning from the holy war at Jerusalem, were undone by the lawlessness of the times, and, forgetful of all knightly vows, turned robbers and foes where they should have been warders and helpers. The lesser nobles and landholders were become freebooters and plunderers, while the common people, pillaged and oppressed by these, had few rights and less freedom.

The children under the oak-trees played at knights and robbers. Neighboring the meadow was the common pasture where tethered goats and sheep, and large, slow cattle, stood them as great flocks and caravans to sally out upon and harry. Now and again a party would break forth from one clump of trees to raid their playmates in a pretended village within another. Of storming castles, or of real knight's play, they knew naught; for they were of the common people, poor working-folk sunk to a state but little above thralldom, and they heard, in the guarded talk of their elders, stories only of the robber-knights' dark acts,

never of deeds daring and true, such as belong to unspotted knighthood.

As the young folk lay in make-believe ambush among the shrubbery near the edge of the plateau, Ludovic, the oldest boy, suddenly called to them to look where, from the forest, a figure on horseback was coming out upon the highway.



"THE TWO KNIGHTS WHEELED THEIR HORSES AND DASHED AT EACH OTHER AGAIN AND AGAIN." (SEE NEXT PAGE.)

"See!" Ludovic cried. "Yonder comes a sightly knight. Look, Hansei, at his shining armor and his glittering lance."

"He is none of hereabout," nodded Hansei,

flashing his wide blue eyes upon the gleaming figure. "My lord's men-at-arms are none so shining fair. Whence may he be, Ludovic?"

"How should I know?" asked Ludovic, testily, with the older boy's vexation when a youngster asks him that which he cannot answer. "Small chance he bringeth good," added he, "wherever he be from; but, in any case, let us lie here until he passes."

"He weareth a long ruddy beard," said keen-eyed Gretel, as a slight bend in the road brought the knight full-facing the group.

"It is no long beard," said Hansei, who had been watching eagerly. "'T is something that he bears before him at his saddle-peak."

This was, indeed, true. The shining stranger, as the children could now plainly see, held in front of him, on the saddle-peak, a good-sized burden, though what it was the young watchers could not, for the distance, make out. Nevertheless, they could see that it was no common burden; nor, in truth, was it any common figure that rode along the highway. He was still some distance off, but already the children began to hear the ring of the great horse's iron hoofs on the stones of the road, and the jangle of metal about the rider when sword and armor clashed out their music to the time of trotting hoofs. But as they watched and harkened, their delight and wonder ever growing, there came suddenly to their ears, when the knight had now drawn much closer, the tuneful winding of a horn.

The rider on the highway heard the sound as well; but, to the children's amaze, instead of pricking forward the faster, like a knight of hot courage, he drew rein and turned half-way about, as minded to seek shelter among the willows growing along stream. There was no shelter there, however, for man or horse, and on the other hand the narrowing valley shut the road in, with no footing up the wooded bluff. When the knight saw all this, he rode close into the thicket, and leaning from his saddle, dropped, with wondrous gentleness, his burden among the osiers.

"'T is some treasure," murmured Ludovic. "He fears the robber-knights may get it."

By now there showed, coming down the pass, another knight; but the second comer was no

such goodly figure as the one below. His armor, instead of gleaming in the sunlight, was tarnished and stained. His helmet was black and unplumed, and upon his shield appeared the white cross of a Crusader. Nevertheless, albeit of no glistening splendor, he was of right knightly mien, and the horse he bestrode was a fine creature, whose springy step seemed to scorn the road he trod.

"'T is a knight from the castle," the children said, and Hansei added, "Mighty Herr Banf it is, I know him by his white cross. Now there will be fighting!"

Down below, where the road widened a bit, winding with a bend of the stream, the shining stranger sat his horse, waiting, lance at rest, to see what the black knight would do. The moment the latter espied him he left the matter in no doubt, but couched his lance, and bore hard along the road, as minded to make an end of the stranger; whereupon the latter urged forward his own steed, and the two came together with a huge rush, so that the crash of armor against armor rang out fierce and clear up the pass, and both spears were shattered in the onset.

Then the two knights fought with their swords, dealing such blows as seemed to the children, watching, enough to fell forest trees. They wheeled their horses and dashed at each other again and again, until the air was filled with the din of fighting, and the young watchers were spellbound at the sight.

The shining stranger was a knight of valor, despite the unwillingness he first showed. He laid on stoutly with his blade, so that more than once his foe reeled in the saddle; but the black knight came back each time with greater fury, while the stranger and his horse were plainly weary.

Especially was this true of the horse. Still eagerly he wheeled and sprang forward to each fresh charge; but each time he dashed on more heavily, and more than once he stumbled, so that his rider missed a blow, and was like to have come to the ground through the empty swing of his sword.

At last the Crusader came on with mighty force, whereupon his foe charged again to meet him; but the weary horse stumbled, caught him-

self, staggered forward a pace or two, and came first to his knees, then shoulder down, upon the rough stones of the road. The shining knight pitched forward over his head and lay quite still in the highway, while the Crusader reined in beside him with threatening blade, and shouted to him to cry "quits." But the stranger neither moved nor spoke; so the other alighted from his horse, and bent over him to see his face.

When he had done this he drew back, and putting his horn to his lips, blew four great blasts, which he repeated again and again, waiting after each to listen.

Presently an answering horn sounded in the distance, and a little later a party of mounted men came dashing down the road from the castle. These clustered about the fallen knight, and when one, who seemed to be their leader, and whom the children knew for Baron Everhardt himself, saw the stranger's face, he turned to the victor and for very joy smote him between the iron-clad shoulders, from which the children thought that the new-comer could have been no friend of their baron.

Then the men stooped and, by main force, lifted the limp figure in its jangling armor, and set it astride the great horse that stood stupidly by as wondering what had befallen his master. The latter made no move, but lay forward on the good steed's neck, and so they made him fast, after doing which the whole party turned their faces upward, and rode along toward the castle.

Not until the last sound died away up the pass did the children come out from their maze and great awe. They drew back from the edge of the cliff and looked wonderingly at one another, for it seemed to them as if years must have gone by since they had begun their play on the plateau. At last Ludovic spoke.

"The treasure is still among the osiers," he said. "When night falls, Hansei, thou and I will slip down across the stream and find it. There may be great riches there. But no word about it; for if they knew it at the castle we should lose our pains."

Solemnly Hansei agreed to Ludovic's plan, and the children left the plateau, thinking of all that they had seen, and silently climbed down the path to their homes along the cliff.

## CHAPTER II.

### HOW KARL THE ARMORER TOOK THE SHINING KNIGHT'S TREASURE FROM AMONG THE OSIERS.

THE children had scarcely gone from the plateau when there came down the defile from the castle a tall, broad-shouldered man, clad in leather that was worn and creased, showing much hard wear. Over his left shoulder he carried two great swords in their scabbards, and his right hand gripped a long, stout staff. The face beneath his hood was brown and weather-beaten, of long and thoughtful mold, but turned from overmuch sternness by the steady, kindly gleam of his gray eyes.

Had the children still been upon the plateau they would have known the figure for Karl of the forge in the forest below the village. He had been, as was often his errand, to the castle, this time with a breastlet that he had wrought for the baron, and was returning with the very sword wherewith the Herr Banf had made end of the shining knight, and with that blade also which had been the stranger's own, to make good all hurts to their tempered edges and fit them for further service in battle.

He swung along the descending road until he came over against the place by the clump of osiers, where the children had seen the knight drop his burden. There he suddenly stopped, and leaned to listen. He thought that he heard a faint cry from the green tangle; so he waited a little space, to learn if it would sound again. Sure enough, it came a second time—a feeble, piteous moan, as of some young creature in distress, and spent with long wailing.

He plunged in among the osiers; but he had gone but a step or two when he started back in dismay, for he had nearly trodden upon a yellow-haired babe who sat among the willows. He reached up his arms, and Karl stooped and raised him to his broad chest.

"Now, what foul work is here?" he muttered to himself. "This is no chick from the village, nor from the castle either, or there would have been hue and cry ere this!"

He pressed back the little face that had been buried against his neck, and surveyed it sharply.

"What is thy name, little one?" he demanded.

At sound of the armorer's voice the child again looked at him, and seemed not to understand the question until Karl had several times repeated it, saying the words slowly and plainly, when at last the baby said, with a touch of impatience: "Wulf, Wulf," adding plaintively: "Wulf hungry."

Then he broke down and sobbed tiredly on Karl's big shoulder, so that the armorer was fain to hush him softly, comforting him with wonderful gentleness, while he drew from his own wallet a bit of coarse bread and gave it to the little fellow. The latter ate it with a sharp appetite, and afterward drank a deep draught from the leather cup which Karl filled from the stream. As he was drinking, a sound was heard, as of some one passing on the road, whereupon the boy became suddenly still, looking at Karl in a way that made the armorer understand that for some reason it had been taught him that unknown sounds were a signal for silence.

"Ay?" thought Karl. "That 's naughty like a baby. He has been with hunted men to learn that trick."

When the child had eaten and drunk all he would, he settled down again in Karl's arms, asking no questions, if, indeed, he could talk enough to do so, a matter of which the armorer doubted; for the little chap was but three or four years old at most. He took it kindly when Karl settled him against his shoulder, throwing over him a sort of short cloak of travel-stained red stuff, in which he had been wrapped as he lay among the osiers, and stepped out upon the road. He first made sure that no one was in sight; then he walked hurriedly forward, minded to leave the highway as soon as he reached a little foot-path he knew that led through the forest to his forge.

Good fortune favored him, and he gained the foot-path without meeting any one; so that, ere long, the two were passing through the deep, friendly wood, the baby fast asleep in Karl's arms. Karl stepped softly as any woman, lest his charge awaken.

Thus they fared, until at last they reached the forge and the hut where the armorer dwelt alone. Karl laid little Wulf upon a heap of skins just beyond the great chimney, and began to prepare food for himself and his charge.

### CHAPTER III.

#### HOW WULF FARED AT KARL THE ARMORER'S HUT.

BIG KARL the armorer was busy at his forge, next morning, long before his wee guest awakened. Working with deft lightness of hand at a small, long anvil close beside the forge, Karl had tempered and hammered the broken point of Herr Banf's sword until the stout blade was again ready for yeoman service, and then he turned to the stranger knight's blade, which was broken somewhat about the hilt and guard.

It was a good weapon, and as Karl traced his finger thoughtfully down its length, he turned it toward the open door, that the early sunlight might catch it. Then he suddenly gave a start, and hastily carried the sword out into the full daylight, where he stared it over closely from hilt to point, turning it this way and that, with knit brows and a look of deep sorrow on his browned visage. After that he strode into the smithy, and went over to where the boy lay, still fast asleep.

Turning him over upon the pelts, he studied the little face as sharply as he had done the sword, noting the broad white brow, the delicate round of the cheek, and the set of the chin, firm despite its baby curves; and as he did so a great sternness came over the face of the armorer.

"There 's some awful work here," he said at last to himself. "Heaven be praised I came upon the little one! Would that I might have had a look at the face of that big knight."

Still musing, he turned and went to a cleverly hid cupboard in the wall beside the great chimney. Opening this, he disclosed an array of blades of many sorts and shapes, and from among these he took one that in general appearance seemed the fellow of the stranger's weapon, save that it had, to all look, seen but scant service in warfare.

Karl compared the two, and then set to a strange task. Hanging the service-battered sword naked within the cupboard, he took the new blade and began to ill-treat it upon his anvil—battering the hilt, taking a bit of metal from the guard, and putting nicks into the edge,

only to beat and grind them very carefully out again. He took a bottle of acid from a shelf and spilled a few drops where blade met hilt, wiping it off again when it had somewhat

This done, he sheathed it in the scabbard which the stranger had worn, and which was a fair sheath, wrought with gold ornaments cunningly devised. Karl looked at it with longing.



"PUTTING HIS HORN TO HIS LIPS, HE BLEW FOUR GREAT BLASTS." (SEE PAGE 115.)

stained and roughened the steel. This roughness he afterward smoothed away, and worked at the sword until he had it looking like a badly used tool put in good order by a skilful smith.

"I 'd like well to save it for ye, youngster," he said; "but 't is a fair risk as it stands. Let Herr Ritter Banf alone for having spied the gold o' this sheath; it must e'en go back



to him." He laid the sheathed weapon away in a chest with Herr Banf's own until such time as he should make his next trip to the castle.

He had hardly done when, turning, he beheld the child watching him from the pile of skins, looking at the strange scene about him, but keeping quiet, though the tender lips quivered and the look in the blue eyes filled Karl with pity.

"There 's naught to fear, little one," he said with gruff kindness, lifting the boy from the pile. And from out the coals of the forge he drew a pannikin, where it had been keeping warm some porridge.

Very gently he proceeded to give the porridge to the child, with some rich goat's milk to help it along. In truth, however, it needed not that to give the boy an appetite. He ate in a half-famished way that touched Karl's heart.

"In sooth, now," the latter said, watching him, "thou 'st roughed it, little one, and much I marvel what it all may mean. But one thing sure, this is no time to be asking about the farings of any of *thy* breed, so thou shalt e'en bide here with old Karl till these evil days lighten, or Count Rudolph comes to help the land—if it be not past helping. It 'll be hard fare for thee, my sweet, but there 's no doing other. The castle yonder were worse for thee than the forge here with Karl."

"Karl?" The child spoke with the fearless ease of one wonted, even thus early, to question strangers and to be answered by them.

"Ay, Karl," replied the armorer. "Karl, who will be father and mother to thee till such time as God sends thee to thine own again."

"Good Karl," said the baby, when the man ceased speaking, and he reached out his hands to the armorer. The latter lifted him and carried him to the forge door.

"Thou 'rt a sturdy rascal," he said, nodding approval of the firm, well-knit little figure. "Sit thou there and finish the porridge."

The little fellow sat in the wide door of the smithy and ate his coarse food with a relish good to see. It was a rough place into which he had tumbled—how rough, he was too young as yet to realize; but much worse, even of outward things, might have fallen to his share.

Big Karl at his forge knew naught of books, and to him, in those evil days, had come much knowledge of the cruelty and wickedness of evil men. Nevertheless, safe within his strong nature dwelt the child-soul, unhurt by all these. It looked from his honest blue eyes, and put tenderness into the strength of his great hands when he touched the other child, and this child-soul was to be the boy's playmate through the years of childhood; a wholesome playmate it was, keeping Wulf company cleanly wise, and no harm came to him, but rather good.

Then, besides the ministering care of the gentle, manly big armorer, little Wulf had, through those years, the teaching and companionship of the great forest. It grew close up about the shop, so that its small wild life constantly came in at the open doors, or invited the youngster forth to play. Rabbits and squirrels peeped in at him; birds wandered in and built their nests in dark corners; and one winter a vixen fox took shelter with them, remaining until spring, and grew so tame that she would eat bread from Wulf's hand.

The great trees were his constant companions and friends, but one mighty oak that grew close beside the door, and sent out its huge arms completely over the shop, became, next to Karl, his chosen comrade. Whenever the armorer had to go to village or castle, Wulf used to take shelter in this tree, not so much from fear,—for even in those evil days the armorer's grandson, as he grew to be regarded by those who came about the forge, was too insignificant to be molested,—but because of his love for the great tree. As he became older he was able to climb higher and higher among its black arms, until at last he made him a nest in the very crown of the wood giant.

Every tree, throughout its life, stores up within its heart light and heat from the sun. It does this so well, because it is its appointed task in nature, that the very life and love that the sun stands for to us become a part of its being, knit up within its woody fiber. When we burn this wood in our stoves or our fireplaces the warmth and blaze that are thrown out are just this sunshine which the tree has caught in its heart from the time it was a tiny seedling till the ax was laid at its root. So, when we sit by the coal fire

and enjoy its genial radiance, we are really warming ourselves by some of the same sunlight and warmth that sifted down through the years went by, he learned to think of them as a part of one of Karl's stories, one that he always meant, sometime, to ask him to tell again.



LITTLE WULF IN THE DOORWAY OF THE ARMORER'S FORGE.

leaves of great forest trees—perhaps thousands of years ago.

Into Wulf's sound young heart there crept, as the years went by, somewhat of the strength and the sunshine-storing quality of his forest comrade, until, long before he became a man, those who knew him grew to feel that here was a strong, warm heart of human sunshine, ready to be useful and comforting wherever use and comfort were needed.

At first faint memories haunted him; but as

The years slipped away, however, and his childish impressions grew fainter and fainter, until at last they had quite faded into the far past.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### HOW WULF FIRST WENT TO THE CASTLE, AND WHAT BEFELL.

For a matter of nine or ten years Wulf dwelt with Karl at the forge, and knew no other manner of life than if he had been indeed

the armorer's own grandson. He was now a well-grown lad of perhaps fourteen years, not tall, but sturdy, strong of thigh and arm, and good to look at, with a ruddy color, fair hair, and steady eyes.

Karl had taught him to fence and thrust, and much of sword-play, in which the armorer was skilled, and while his play at these was that of a lad, the boy could fairly hold his own with cudgel and quarter-staff, and more than once had surprised Karl by a clever feint or twist or a stout blow, when, as was their wont on summer evenings, the two wrestled or sparred together on the short green grass under the great oak-tree.

He was happy, going about his work with the big armorer, or wandering up and down the forest, or, of long winter evenings, sitting beside the forge fire watching Karl, who used to sit, knife in hand, deftly carving a long-handled wooden spoon, or a bowl. The women in the village were always glad to trade for these with fresh eggs, or a pat of butter, or a young fowl; for the armorer had as clever a knack with his knife as with his hammer.

It happened, at last, on a day when Karl was making ready to go to the castle with a corselet which he had mended for the baron himself, that the armorer met with an accident that changed Wulf's whole life. Karl was doing a bit of tinkering on the smaller anvil by the forge, when one support of the iron gave way, and it fell, crushing the great toe of one foot so that the stout fellow

fairly rocked with the pain, while Wulf made haste to prepare a poultice of wormwood for the hurt member.

Despite all their skill, however, the toe continued to swell and to stiffen, until it was plain that all thought of Karl's climbing the mountain that day, or for many days to come, must be put aside.

"There's no help for it, lad," he said at last, as he sat on the big chest, scowling blackly at his foot in its rough swathings. "It's well on



"THE BOY BEGAN TO PAT THE NECK OF THE CHARGER." (SEE PAGE 122.)

toward noon now, and the baron will pay me my wage on my own head if his corselet be not to hand to-day; for he rides to-morrow, with a company from the castle, on an errand be-

yond. Thou 'lt need to take the castle road, boy, and speedily, if thou 'rt to be back by night."

Nothing could have pleased Wulf more than such an errand; for although he often went with Karl on other matters about the country, and had even gone with him as far as the Convent of St. Ursula on the other side of the forest, the armorer, despite his entreaties, had never allowed him to go along when his way lay toward the Swartzburg. This had puzzled the boy greatly, for Karl steadfastly refused him any reason why it should be.

The boy made all haste, therefore, to get ready for the journey, lest Karl should repent of his plan. It was but the shortest of quarters, in fact, before he was passing through the wood toward the road to the Swartzburg.

It was not so very long ere he had cleared the forest and was stepping up the rough stone road that climbed the mountain pass to the castle.

Up and up the stony way he trudged stoutly, until it became at last the merest bridle-path, descending to the open moat across which the bridge was thrown. On a tower above he descried the sentry, and below, beyond the bridge, the great gates into the castle garth stood open.

Doubting somewhat as to what he ought to do, he crossed the bridge and passed through the gloomy opening that pierced the thick wall. Once inside, he stood looking about him curiously, forgetful, in his wonder and delight at the scene, that Karl had told him to ask for Gotta Brent, Baron Everhardt's man-at-arms, and to deliver the corselet to him.

He was still without the inner wall of the castle, in a sort of courtyard of great size, the outer bailey of the stronghold. Beyond where he stood he could see a second wall with big gates, similar to the one through which he had just passed. Before these gates, in the outer court, two young men were fencing, while a third stood beside them, acting as a sort of umpire, or judge, of fence. The contestants were very equally matched, and Wulf watched them with keenest enjoyment. He had fenced with Karl, and once or twice a knight, while waiting at the forge, had deigned to pass the time in crossing blades with the boy, always to

the latter's discomfiture; but he had never before stood by while two skilled men were at sword-play, and the sight held him spellbound.

Thanks to Karl, he was familiar with the mysteries of quart and tierce and all the rest, and followed with knowing delight each clever feint and thrust made with the grace and precision of good fence. He could watch forever, it seemed to him; but as he stood thus, following the beautiful play, out through the gate of the inner bailey came three children, a girl a year or two younger than he, and two boys about his own age.

He gave them but the briefest glance, for just at that moment the players began a new set-to that claimed his attention. A moment later, however, he felt a sharp buffet at the side of his head, and turning, saw that one of the boys had thrown the rind of a melon so as to strike him on the cheek. As Wulf looked around both the boys were laughing; but the little girl stood somewhat off from them, her eyes flashing and her cheeks aglow as with anger. She said no word, but looked with great scorn upon her companions.

"Well, tinker," called the boy who had thrown the melon-rind, "mind thy manners before the lady. Have off thy cap or thou 'lt get this"; and he grasped the other half-rind of melon, which the second boy held.

"Nay, Conradt," the little maid cried, staying his hand. "The lad is a stranger, and come upon an errand. Do we treat such folk thus?"

Wulf's cap was by now in his hand, and, with crimson cheeks, he made a shy salutation to the little girl, who returned it courteously, while the boys still laughed.

"What dost thou next, tinker?" the one whom she had called Conradt said, strutting forward. "Faith, thy manners sorely need mending. What dost to me?"

"Fight thee," said Wulf, quick as a flash; and then drew back abashed, for as the boy came forward Wulf saw that he bore a great hump upon his twisted back, while one of his shoulders was higher than the other.

The deformed boy saw the motion, and his face grew dark with rage and hate.

"Thou 'lt fight me?" he screamed, springing forward. "Ay, that thou shalt, and rue it

after, tinker's varlet that thou art!" And with his hand he smote Wulf upon the mouth, whereupon Wulf dropped the corselet and clenched his fists, but could lay no blow on the pitiful creature before him. Seeing this, the other, half crazed with anger, drew a short sword which he wore, and made at Wulf, who raised the armorer's staff which he still held, and struck the little blade to the ground.

By now the two fencers and their umpire were drawn near to see the trouble, and one of them picked up the sword.

"Come, cockerel," he said, restoring it to Conradt, "put up thy spur and let be. Now, lad, what is the trouble?" and he turned sharp upon Wulf.

"'T is the armorer's cub," he said to his companions as he made him out. "By the rood, lad, canst not come on a small errand for thy master without brawling in this fashion in the castle yard? Go do thy message, and get about home, and bid thy master teach thee what is due thy betters ere he sends thee hither again."

"Yon lad struck me," Wulf said stoutly. "I've spoken no word till now."

"Truly, Herr Werner," put in the little girl, earnestly, "it is as he says. Conradt has e'en gone far out of his way to shōw the boy an ill will, though he has done naught."

At this Herr Werner looked again upon Conradt. "So, cockerel," he said; "didst not get wisdom from the last pickle I pulled thee out of?"

"Why does the fellow hang about here, then?" demanded Conradt, sulkily. "Let him go to the stables, as he should, and leave his matter there."

"I was to see Gotta Brent," Wulf said, ignoring Conradt and speaking to the young knight.

"See him thou shalt," was the reply. But anything further that Herr Werner might have said was cut short by the sound of a great hue and cry of men, and a groom ran through the gate shouting:

"Back! Back for your lives! The foul fiend himself is loose here!"

At his heels came half a dozen men with stable-forks and poles, and two others who

were hanging with all their weight upon the bridle-reins of a great horse that was doing his best to throw off their hold, rearing and plunging furiously, and now and again lashing out with his iron-shod hoofs.

There was a hurrying to shelter in the group about Wulf, who soon stood alone, staring at the horse. The latter finally struck one of the grooms, so that the fellow lay where he rolled, at one side of the court; and then began a battle royal between horse and men.

One after another, and all together, the men tried to lay hold upon the dangling rein, only to be bitten, or struck, or tossed aside, as the case might be, until at last the huge beast stood free in the middle of the court, while the grooms and stable-hangers made all haste to get out of the way, some limping, others rubbing heads or shoulders, and one nursing a badly bitten arm.

"Tinker," called the knight, from behind an abutment of the wall, "art clean daft? Get away before he makes a meal off thee! Gad! 'T will take an arrow to save him now, and for that any man's life would be forfeit to Herr Banf."

There was a scream from the little girl, for the horse had spied Wulf, and came edging toward him, looking wild enough, with ears laid back and teeth showing, as minded to make an end to the boy, as doubtless he was. For the life of him Wulf could not have told why he was not afraid as he stood there alone, and with no weapon save the armorer's staff, which he had not time to raise ere the beast was upon him.

Then were all who looked on amazed at what they saw; for close beside Wulf the horse stopped, and began smelling the boy. Then he took to trembling in all his legs, and arched his neck and thrust his big head against Wulf's breast, until, half dazed, the boy raised a hand and began patting the broad neck and stroking the mane of the charger.

"By the rood," cried one of the grooms, "the tinker hath the horseman's word, and no mistake! The old imp knows it."

"See if thou canst take the halter, boy," called Herr Werner; and laying a hand upon the rein, Wulf stepped back a pace, whereupon the horse pressed close to him and whinnied



eagerly, as if fearful that Wulf would leave him. He smelled him over again, thrusting his muzzle now into Wulf's hands, now against his face, and putting up his nose to take the boy's breath, as horses do with those they love.

"By my forefathers!" cried Herr Werner. "Could Herr Banf see him now—aha!"

He paused, for, hurrying into the courtyard, followed by still another frightened groom, came a knight who, seeing Wulf and the horse, stood as if rooted in his tracks. Softly now the charger stepped about the boy, nickering under his breath, so low that his nostrils hardly stirred, stooping meekly, as one who loved a service he would do, and thus waited.

An instant Wulf stood dazed; then he passed his hand across his forehead, for a strange, troubled notion, as of some forgotten dream, passed through his brain. At last, obeying some impelling instinct that yet seemed to him like a memory, he laid a hand upon the horse's withers and sprang to his back.

Up then pranced the noble creature, and stepped about the courtyard, tossing his head and gently champng the bit, as a horse will when he is pleased.

"Ride him to the stables, boy, and I will have word with thee there," cried the older knight, who had come out last; and pressing the rein, though still wondering to himself how he knew what to do, Wulf turned the steed through the inner gate to the bailey, and letting him have his head, was carried proudly to the stables whence the throng of grooms and stable-boys had come rushing. They came to the group of outbuildings and offices that made up the stables, followed by all the men, Herr Banf in the lead, and the place, which had been quite deserted, was immediately thronged, attendants from the castle itself coming on a run as news spread of the wonderful thing that was happening.

Once within the stable-yard, the horse stood quiet, to let Wulf dismount; but not even Herr Banf himself would he let lay a hand upon him, though he stood meek as a sheep while the boy, instructed by the knight, took off the bridle and fastened on the halter. Then he led his charge into a stall that one of the lads pointed out to him, and made him fast before the manger.

When this was done, the horse gave a rub of his head against Wulf, and then turned to eating his fodder quietly, as though he had never done otherwise.

Then Herr Banf took to questioning Wulf sharply; but very little could the boy tell him. Indeed, some instinct warned him against speaking even of the faint thoughts stirring within him. He was full of anxiety to get away to Karl and tell *him* of this wonderful new experience, and he could say naught to the knight save that he was Karl the armorer's grandson; that he had never had the care of horses, and in his life had mounted but few, chiefly those of the men-at-arms who rode with their masters to the forge when Karl's skill was needed. He was troubled, too, about Karl's hurt, of which he told Herr Banf, and begged to be allowed to hasten back to the smithy.

"Go, then," said Herr Banf, at last, "and I will see thy grandsire to-morrow. Thou 'rt too promising a varlet to be left to grow up an armorer. We need thy kind elsewhere."

So, when he had given the nearly forgotten corselet to Gotta Brent, Wulf fared down the rocky way to the forge, where he told Karl all that had chanced to him that day.

"Let that remain with thee alone, boy," the armorer said, when the boy had told him of the strange memories that teemed in his brain. "These are no times to talk of such matters an thou 'dst keep a head on thy shoulders. Thou 'rt of my own raising, Wulf; but more than that I cannot tell thee, for I do not know." And there the lad was forced to let the matter rest.

"It is all one with my dreams," he said to himself, as he sought his bed of skins. "Mayhap other dreams will make it clearer."

But no dreams troubled his healthy boy's sleep that night, nor woke he until the morning sun streamed full in his upturned face.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### HOW WULF WENT TO THE SWARTZBURG, AND OF HIS BEGINNING THERE.

It was maybe a week after Wulf's visit to the Swartzburg that Herr Banf rode through the forest to the smithy. He was mounted

upon the great stallion that had been so wild that day, and as he drew rein before the shop the horse gave a shrill neigh, for he smelled Wulf. Karl's foot was by so far mended that he was able to limp about the forge, and he and the boy were busy mending a wrought hauberk of fine chain mail which the lady superior of St. Ursula had sent to them that morning.

"A fair day, friend Karl," the knight called out as he sat his horse under the big oak-tree. "Here am I come for that youngster of thine. He is too useful a scamp to be let spend his days tinkering here. Haply he has told thee how this big 'Siegfried' of mine took to him. I' faith, not a groom at the castle can handle the horse!"

"Ay?" said Karl, and he said no more, but stood with hands folded upon the top of his hammer, and looked steadily at Herr Banf.

Wulf, meanwhile, had dropped the tongs that he held, and run out to the horse, who now stood nuzzling his neck and face in great delight.

"By the rood," cried Herr Banf, "'t is plain love at first sight! If any other came so near Siegfried's teeth, I 'd look to see him eaten. I must have the boy, Karl!"

Now, that great horse was none other than the one which the shining knight had ridden on the day of his meeting with Herr Banf. The Crusader had taken the beast for his own charger, and a rare war-horse he was, but getting on in years by now, and turning wild at times, after the manner of his kind. Not a groom or stable-lad about the castle but had reason to know his temper; so that, because of their fear of him, the horse often lacked for care.

When Herr Banf had said that Wulf must come with him, Karl stood silent, watching the lad and Siegfried; but in a moment he said:

"In truth, they seem fast friends. Well, it shall be as the boy says."

"For what he says I will undertake," the knight said, laughing. "Wilt come to the castle, lad?"

Wulf looked from the horse to Karl and back again. It was easy to see where his desire lay.

"Shall I be able to see Grandsire Karl now and then?" he asked, turning to Herr Banf.

"As often as need be," said the knight.

"What shall I say?" Wulf turned to Karl.

"What thou wilt," the armorer nodded.

"We have talked o' that."

So had they, and Wulf's question was but the last wavering of the boy's heart, loath to leave all it had yet known. In another moment his will regained its strength, and the matter ended in his taking again the climbing road up the Swartzburg pass, this time with a hand clinging to Herr Banf's stirrup-leather, while the great horse stepped gently, keeping pace with the boy's stride.

"Where didst thou learn to bewitch a horse, lad?" the knight asked as they journeyed. "What is thy 'horseman's word'?"

"I have none," was the reply. "The horse seemed to know me, and I him. I cannot tell how or other."

"By my forefathers, but beasts be hard to understand as men! What was 't thou didst, by the way, to the little crooked cock at the castle?"

"Him they call Conradt, Herr Knight? I did naught."

"Well, he means to fight thee for it."

"Nay," replied Wulf, "that he 'll not."

"How is that?"

"It would not be becoming for me to fight him."

"So," Herr Banf said grimly. "Thou 'st a good idea of what is due thy betters."

"It is not that," explained Wulf, simply.

"I am the better of us two; a whole man goes not against a weakling."

The knight looked keenly down at the lad, noting, as he had not done before, the easy movement of his body as he stepped lightly along, more like a soldier than like a peasant. He was alert and trim, with shapely shoulders and the head carried well up.

"A queer armorer's lad, this," thought Herr Banf, in some wonder. But by now they were before the castle watch-tower, and in a moment more, still with one hand at the knight's stirrup, Wulf again entered at the castle gate. There, in the outer bailey, Herr Banf lighted down, and bade Wulf take Siegfried to the stables for the night.

It was Hansei (now grown to young man-

hood) who at supper-time took him into the great hall where the household and its hangers-on gathered for meals, and got for him a trencher and food, though little cared Wulf for eating on that first night, when all was new and strange to him.

The hall was very large, and Wulf, looking up toward its lofty roof, could not see its timbers for the deep shadows there. At either end was a great fireplace, but the one at the upper end was the larger and finer. Near it, on a platform raised above the earthen floor, Baron Everhardt sat at board, with the knights of his train. Below them were the men-at-arms and lower officers of the castle, and seated upon benches about the walls were the fighting-men and general hangers-on of the place.

These sat not at board, but helped themselves to the food that was passed about among them after the tables were served, and ate, some from their hands, others from wooden trenchers which they had secured. Wulf and Hansei were among the lowliest of the lot, and the stable-boys did not sit down at all, but took their supper standing, leaning against the wall just inside the door, and farthest from the hearth, and they were among the last served.

But, as we have seen, Wulf cared little that night for food or drink, though his new friend pressed him to eat. Soon the great tankards began to pass from hand to hand; and the men drank long and deep, while loud jests and mighty laughter filled all the place, until only Wulf's sturdy boy's pride kept him from stealing out, through the darkness, back to Karl at the forge.

Presently, however, he began to notice faces among the company at the upper end of the hall. Two or three ladies were present, having come in by another door when the meal was well over, and these were sitting with the baron and Herr Banf. One of the ladies, Hansei told him, was the baron's lady, and with her, Wulf noticed, was the little girl whom he had seen at the time of his first visit to the castle.

"Who is she?" he asked.

"A ward of our baron's," Hansei answered, "and she is the Fräulein Elise von Hofenhoer. They say she is to be married, in good time, to young Conradt, the nephew of our baron; and that, methinks, is a sorry fate for any maiden."

"Conradt?"

"Yea; the crooked stick yonder, the baron's precious nephew."

Following Hansei's glance, Wulf descried the hunchback boy of his adventure, seated at board, drinking from a great mug of ale. With him was the other boy, who, Hansei told him, was Waldemar Guelder, and some kin to Herr Banf, in whose charge he was, to be trained as a knight.

"He's not such a bad one," the stable-boy said, "an it were not for Master Conradt, who would drag down the best that had to do with him."

Thus, one by one, Hansei pointed out knights and followers, squires and men, until in Wulf's tired brain all was a jumble of names and faces that he knew not. Glad indeed was he when at last his companion nodded to him, and slipping out from the hall, they made their way to the horse-barn, where, up under the rafters of a great hay-filled loft, the pair made their beds in the fragrant grasses, and slept soundly, until the stamping of horses below them, and the sunlight streaming into their faces through an open door of the loft, awakened them.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HOW CONRADT PLOTTED MISCHIEF, AND HOW WULF WON A FRIEND.

It was perhaps a matter of six weeks after Wulf's coming to the Swartzburg that he sat, one day, in a wing of the stables, cleaning and shining Herr Banf's horse-gear. He was alone at the time, for most of the castle-folk had ridden with the baron on a freebooting errand against a body of merchants known to be traveling that way with rich loads of goods and much money. Only Herr Werner, of all the knights, was at the castle.

Save for Hansei, who stood by him stoutly, Wulf had as yet made no friends among his fellow-workers; but full well had he shown himself able to take his own part, so that his bravery and prowess, and his heartiness to help whenever a lift or a hand was needed, had already won him a place and fair treatment among them. Moreover, his quick wit and

craft with Siegfried, the terror of the stables, made the Master of Horse his powerful friend. And, again, Wulf was already growing well used to the ways of the place, so that it was with a right cheerful and contented mind that he sat, that day, scouring away upon a rusty stirrup-iron.

Presently it seemed to him that he heard a little noise from over by the stables, and peering along under the arch of the great saddle before him, he saw a puzzling thing. Crossing the stable floor with wary tread and watchful mien, as minded to do some deed privily, and fearful to be seen, was Conradt.

"Now, what may he be bent upon?" Wulf asked of his own thought. "No good, I 'll lay wager"; and he sat very still, watching every movement of the little crooked fellow.

Down the long row of stalls went the hunchback, until he reached the large loose box where stood Siegfried. The stallion saw him, and laid back his ears, but made no further sign of noting the new-comer. Indeed, since Wulf had been his tender the old horse had grown much more governable, and for a month or more had given no trouble.

Conradt's face, however, as he drew nigh the stall, was of aspect so hateful and wicked that Wulf stilly, but with all speed, left his place and crept nearer, keeping in shelter behind the great racks of harness, to learn what might be toward. As he did so he was filled with amaze and wrath to see the hunchback, sword in hand, reach over the low wall of the stall and thrust at Siegfried. The horse shied over and avoided the blade, though, from the plunge he made, Wulf deemed that he had felt the point.

While the watcher stood dumfounded, wondering what the thing might mean, Conradt sneaked around to the other side, plainly minded to try that wickedness again, whereupon Wulf sprang forward, snatching up, on his way, a flail that lay to his hand, flung down by one of the men from the threshing-floor.

"Have done with you!" he called as he ran; and forgetting, in his wrath, both the rank and the weakness of the misdoer, he shrieked: "What is 't wouldst do? Out with it!" And he raised the flail.

Taken unaware though he was, Conradt, who

was rare skilful at fence, guarded on the instant, and by a clever twist of his blade cut clean in twain the leather hinge that held together the two halves of the flail. 'T was a master stroke whereat, angry as he was, Wulf wondered, nor could he withhold a swordsman's delight in the blow, albeit the sword's wielder was plain proven a ruffian.

He had small time to think, however, for by now Conradt let at him full drive, and he was sore put to it to fend himself from the onslaught, having no other weapon than the handle of the flail.

Evil was in the hunchback's eyes as he pressed up against his foe, as Wulf was not slow to be aware. The latter could do naught but fend and parry with his stick; but this he did with coolness and skill, as he stood back to wall against the stall, watching every move of that malignant wight with whom he fought.

Up, down, in, out, thrust, parry, return! The sounds filled the barn. Wulf was the taller and equally skilled, but Conradt's weapon gave him an advantage that, but for the blindness of his hatred, would have won his way for him. But soon he was fair weary with fury, and Wulf began to think that he would soon make end of the trouble, when he felt a sharp prick, and something warm and wet began to trickle down his right arm, filling his hand. Conradt saw the stain and gave a joyful grunt.

"One for thee, tinker," he gasped, his breath nigh spent. "I 'll let a little more of thy mongrel blood ere I quit."

"An thou dost," cried Wulf, stung to a fury he seldom felt, "save a drop for thyself. A little that 's honest would not come amiss in the black stream in thy veins." And he guarded again as Conradt came on.

This the latter did with a rush, at which Wulf sprang aside, and ere his foe could whirl he came at him askance, catching his sword-hand just across the back of the wrist with the tip of his stick, so that, for an instant, Conradt's arm dropped, and the point of his blade touched the floor. 'T was a trick in which Wulf felt little pride, though fair enough, and he did not follow up the advantage, knowing he had his enemy beaten for the time.

The hunchback stood glaring at Wulf, but

ere he could move to attack again a voice cried: "Well done, tinker! An ye had a blade, our cockerel had crowed smaller, and I had missed a rare bit of sport."

On this both boys turned, for they knew that voice, and Herr Werner came forward, not laughing now, as mostly he was, but with a sterner look on his youthful face than even Conradt had ever seen.

"Now, then, how is this?" he demanded of Wulf. "What is this brawl about?"

The boy met Werner's eyes frankly. "He had best tell," he said, nodding toward Conradt.

"Suppose, then, thou dost," and Herr Werner looked at the hunchback, who, his eyes going down before the knight's, lied, as was his wont.

"He came at me with the flail, and," he added, unable to withhold bragging, "I clipped it for him."

"And what hadst thou done to make him come at thee?"

"I did but look at the horses, and stood to play with old Siegfried here. 'T is become so that my uncle, the baron himself, may yet look to be called to account by this tinker's upstart."

The stern lines about Herr Werner's mouth grew deeper.

"Heed thou this, Conradt," he said with great earnestness. "Yonder was I, by the pillar, and saw this whole matter. What didst thou plan ill to the stallion for?"

"The truth is, not to have him hereabout," muttered Conradt, his face dark with fear and anger. "These be my uncle's stables, and this great beast hath had tooth or hoof toll off every one about the place."

"True, i' the main," Herr Werner said scornfully. "And for this, is it, that the baron thinketh to make thee Master of the Horse? Shall I tell him with what zeal thou followest thy duties?"

Conradt's face was fair distorted now. Fear of his uncle's wrath was the one thing that kept the wickedness of his evil nature in any sort of check, and well he knew how bitter would be his taste of that wrath should this thing come to the baron's ears.

So, too, knew Herr Werner, and, in less manner, Wulf; for his keen wit had taught him much during his six weeks' service at the castle.

"What shall I say to the baron of this?" demanded Herr Werner again, as he towered above them.

"I care not," muttered Conradt, falsely.

But Wulf said: "Need aught be said, Herr Werner? I hold naught against him, save for Siegfried's sake,"—with a loving glance over at the great horse,—"and 't is not likely he 'll be at this mischief again."

"What say'st thou, my fine fellow?" asked the young knight of Conradt; but the latter said no word.

"Bah!" cried Herr Werner, at last. "In sooth, this tinker is at heart a truer man than thou on every showing. Get hence, that I waste on thee no more of the time that should go to his wound," he added; for Wulf, in moving his arm, had suddenly flinched, and his face was pale. In another moment Herr Werner had the hurt member in hand, and as he was, like most men of that rude time, somewhat skilled in caring for wounds, he had soon bandaged this one, which was of no great extent, but more painful than serious, and was quickly eased.

Meanwhile Conradt had moved off, leaving the two alone. Though it would never be set to his credit, his malice had wrought a good work; for in that hour our Wulf got himself a strong and true friend in the young knight, who was well won by the sterling stuff that showed in the lad.

"He hath more of knightliness in him, here in the stables," thought he, as he left Wulf, "than Conradt will ever know as lord of the castle; and, by my forefathers, he shall have what chance may be mine to give him!"

And that vow Herr Werner never forgot.

## CHAPTER VII.

HOW WULF CLIMBED THE IVY TOWER, AND  
WHAT HE SAW AT THE BARRED WINDOW.

GOOD as his word had Herr Werner been in finding Wulf the chance to show that other stuff dwelt in him than might go to the making of a mere stable-lad. For the next three years he was under the young knight's helping protection, and, thanks to the latter's good offices in part, but in the end, as must always be the



case with boy or man, thanks to his own efforts, he made so good use of his chance that his tinker origin was haply overlooked, if not forgotten, by those left behind him as he rose from height to height of the castle's life.

When all was said and done, 't was hard to hold hatred of such a nature as his. The training of old Karl, and the forest, had done their work well with him, and he was still the simple, sunny-hearted Wulf of the forge, ever ready to help, and forgiving even where forgiveness was unsought. He was by now a sturdy, broad-chested young fellow, getting well on to manhood, noted for his strength and for his skill in all the games and feats of prowess and endurance that were a part of the training of boys in those days. Already had he ridden with Herr Werner in battle, and the baron himself had more than once taken note of the youth, and had on two occasions made him his messenger on errands both perilous and nice, calling for wit as well as bravery.

Only Conradt hated him still—Conradt, with the sorry, twisted soul, that held to hatred as surely as Wulf held to love. He was a year or two older than Wulf, and was already a candidate for knighthood; for, despite his crooked body, he was skilled beyond many who rode in his uncle's following in all play at arms. There was no better swordsman, even among the younger knights, and among the bowmen he had already a name.

Despite all this, however, the baron's nephew was held in light esteem, even among that train of robbers and bandits—for naught better were they, in truth, despite their knighthood and their gentleness. They lived by foray and pillage and petty warfare with other bands like themselves, and in many a village were dark stories whispered of their wild raids.

Yet few even of his own followers would hold long or close fellowship with Conradt, albeit they dared not openly flout the baron's nephew.

Well knew the baron, overlord of all that district, of the doings of his doughty nephew; but for reasons of his own he saw fit to wink at them, save when some worse infamy than common was brought to his notice in such fashion that he could not pass it by. He were a brave man, however, who could dare the baron's

wrath so far as to complain lightly to him of Conradt, so the fellow went for the most part scot-free of his misdeeds, save so far as he might feel the scorn and shunning of his equals.

It was on a bright autumn afternoon that a company of the boys and younger men of the Swartzburg were trying feats of strength and of athletic skill before the castle, in the inner bailey. From a little balcony overlooking the terrace the ladies of the household looked down upon the sports, to which their presence gave more than ordinary zest. Among the ladies was Elise, now grown a fair maiden of some fifteen years. Well was she known to be meant by the baron for the bride of his nephew; but this knowledge among the youths of the place did not hinder many a quick glance from wandering her way, and already had more than one young squire chosen her as the lady of his worship, for whose sake he pledged himself, as the manner of the time was, to deeds of bravery and high virtue.

The contestants in the courtyard had been wrestling and racing. There had been tilts with the spear, and bouts with the fists and of sword-play, when at last one of the number challenged his fellows to a climbing trial of the hardest sort.

Just where the massive square bulk of the keep raised its grim stories a great buttress thrust boldly out from the castle, running up beside the wall of the tower for a considerable distance. The two were just enough apart to be firmly touched on either side by a man who might stand between them, and it was a mighty test of courage and strength for a man to climb up between them, even a few yards, by hand and foot pressure only. It was the great feat to perform among the more ambitious knights and squires about the castle.

The challenger on this afternoon was young Waldemar Guelder, Herr Banf's ward, now grown a stalwart squire; and he raised himself, by sheer strength of grip and pressure of foot and open hand against the rough stones, up and up, until he reached the point, some thirty feet above ground, where the buttress bent in to the main wall again, and gave no further support to the climber, who was fain to come down quickly and by the same way as he went up.



Shouts of "Well done! Well done!" greeted Waldemar's deed when he reached the ground, panting, but flushed with pride, and looked up toward the balcony, whence came a clapping of fair hands and waving of white kerchiefs in token that his prowess had been noted.

Then one after another made trial of the feat; but none, not even Conradt, who was accounted among the skilfulest climbers, was able to reach the mark set by young Guelder, until, last of all, for he had given place time after time to his eagerer fellows, Wulf's turn came.

He, too, glanced up at the balcony as he began the ascent, and Elise, meeting his glance, smiled down upon him. These two were good friends, in a frank fashion little common in that time, when the merest youths deemed it their

duty to throw a tinge of sentimentality into their relation with all maids.

Conradt noted their glances, and glowered at Wulf as the latter prepared to climb. No sneer of his had ever moved Elise to treat "the tinker" with scorn. Indeed, Conradt sometimes fancied that her friendship for Wulf was in despite of him, and of the mastership he often tried to assert over her. That, however, was impossible to an honest nature like Elise. She was Wulf's friend because of her hearty trust in him and liking for him, and so she leaned forward now, eager to see what he might do toward meeting Waldemar's feat.

Steadily Wulf set hands and feet to the stones, and braced himself for the work. Reach by reach he raised himself higher, higher, until it



WULF DEFENDS HIMSELF AND THE HORSE FROM CONRADT. (SEE PAGE 126.)

was plain to all that he would find it no task to climb to where the champion had gone.

"He 'll win to it!" cried one and then another of the watchers, and Waldemar himself shouted out encouragement to the climber when once he seemed to falter.

At last came a cry from Hansei: "He has it! Hurrah! Hurrah!" And a general shout went up. From the balcony, too, came the sound of applause as Wulf reached the top of the buttress.

"In truth, our tinker hath mounted in the world," sneered Conradt from the terrace. "Well, there 's naught more certain than that he 'll come down again."

Wulf heard the words, as Conradt meant he should, and caught, as well, the laugh that rose from some of the lower fellows. Then a murmur of surprise went through the company.

The walls of the keep were overgrown with ivy, so that only here and there a mere shadow showed where a staircase window pierced the stones. In the recess where the young men were wont to climb, the vines were torn down, but above the buttress, over both keep and castle, the great branches grew and clung, reaching clean to the top of the tower; and Wulf, unable to go farther between the walls, was now pulling himself up along the twisted ivy growth that covered the face of the tower.

On he went, minded to reach the top and

scale the battlement. It was no such great feat, the lower wall once passed, but none of the watchers below had ever thought to try it, so were they surprised into the more admiration,



WULF CLIMBS THE IVY ON THE TOWER AND MAKES A STRANGE DISCOVERY.

while in the balcony was real fear for the adventurous climber.

He reached the top in safety, however, and passing along the parapet just below the battlement, turned a corner and was lost to their sight.

On the farther side of the keep he found, as he had deemed likely, that the ivy gave him safe and easy support to the ground, so lowering himself to the vines again, he began the descent.

He had gone but a little way when, feeling with his feet for a lower hold, he found none directly under him, but was forced to reach out toward the side to get it, from which he judged that he must be opposite a window, and lowering himself further, he came upon two upright iron bars set in a narrow casement nearly overgrown with ivy. Behind the bars all seemed dark; but as Wulf's eyes became wonted to the dimness, he became aware, first of a shadowy something that seemed to move, then of a face gaunt, white, and drawn, with great, unreasoning eyes that stared blankly into his own.

He felt his heart hammering at his ribs as he stared back. The piteous, vacant eyes seemed to draw his very soul, and a choking feeling came in his throat. For a full moment the two pairs of eyes gazed at each other, until Wulf felt as if his heart would break for sheer pity; then the white face behind the bars faded back into the darkness, and Wulf was ware once more of the world without, the yellow, autumnal sunshine, and the green ivy with its black ropes of twisted stems, that were all that kept him from dashing to death on the stones of the courtyard below.

So shaken was he by what he had seen that he could scarcely hold by his hands while he reached for foothold. Little by little, however, he gathered strength, and came to himself again, until by the time he reached the ground he was once more able to face his fellows, who gathered about, full of praise for his feat.

But little cared our Wulf for their acclaim when, glancing up toward the balcony, he caught the wave of a white hand. His heart nearly leaped from his throat, a second later, as he saw a little gleam of color, and was ware that the hand held a bit of bright ribband which presently fluttered over the edge of the balcony and down toward the terrace.

It never touched earth. There was a rush toward it by all the young men, each eager to grasp the token; but Wulf, with a leap that carried his outstretched hand high above the

others, laid hold upon the prize and bore it quickly from out the press.

"T is mine! mine! Yield it!" screamed Conradt, rushing after him.

"Nay; that thou must prove," laughed Wulf; and winning easily away from the hunchback, he ran through the inner bailey to his own quarters, whence, being busy about some matters of Herr Werner's, he came not forth until nightfall. At that time Conradt did not see him; for the baron had summoned his nephew to him about a matter of which we shall hear more.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### HOW BARON EVERHARDT WAS OUTLAWED, AND HOW WULF HEARD OF THE BABY IN THE OSIERS.

ONE bright morning, not long after Wulf had climbed the ivy tower, there came to the Swartzburg a herald bearing a message whereat Baron Everhardt laughed long and loud. So, also, laughed the youngerlings of the place when the thing came to be noised among them; albeit two or three, and in especial Wulf and Hansei, who was now head groom, laughed not, but were sore troubled.

The baron had been declared an outlaw.

For an emperor now ruled in Germany, and good folk had begun to dare hope that the evil days might be drawing to a close. The new emperor was none other than Rudolf of Hapsburg, he who had been count of that name, and since coming to the throne he had bent his whole mind and strength to the task of bringing peace and good days to the land, and order and law within reach of the unhappy common folk whose lives were now passed in hardship and fear.

To this end the Emperor Rudolf had early sent to summon all of the barons and the lesser nobles of the land to come to his help against the rebel counts, Ulric and Eberhard of Württemberg, who had joined with King Ottakar of Bohemia to defy the new ruler. The head of the Swartzburg had been summoned with the others; but, filled with contempt for "the poor Swiss count," as he dubbed the emperor, had defied him, and torn up the summons before the eyes of the herald who brought it.

Nevertheless, in spite of the refusal of nearly all the nobles to aid their emperor, the latter had, with his own men, gone against the two rebel counts and their kingly ally, and had beaten their armies and brought them to sue for peace. Now he was turning his attention to the larger task of putting fear of the law and of rightful authority into the hearts of the robber-nobles.

Of these a goodly number were already declared outlaws, and now the baron's turn had come. Moreover, one of the men of the Swartzburg, who had ridden beyond the mountains on a matter for Herr Banf, had ridden back with word that the emperor, with a strong army, was already out against the outlawed strongholds, and that he meant soon to call at the Swartzburg.

"And a warm welcome shall we give this new emperor of ours," boasted Conradt, on the castle terrace. "Emperor, forsooth! By the rood, Count Rudolf will have need of all his Swiss rabble, if he would bring the Swartzburg's men to knee before him!"

A chorus of assent greeted this speech. For once his hearers listened respectfully to the baron's nephew. Right eager were all the young men for the fray that was threatening; and so great was their contempt for the emperor that they could see for it but one outcome.

"But that his Austrians were in revolt and his army divided," declared one, "King Ottakar had never yielded to the Swiss. He of Hapsburg will find it a harder matter to yoke the German barons." And all his hearers nodded assent to the bragging speech.

What Baron Everhardt, at council with his knights, thought of the outlook, not even Conradt, among those on the terrace, rightly knew; but a few hours later, by orders sent out through the stewards and the masters of arms and horse, the routine of the castle was being put upon a war footing, to the joy of the eager young men. All were busy, each at his own line of duty, in the work of preparation for battle, and, to Wulf's delight, it fell to his lot to fare down the valley to the forge on an errand for Herr Werner.

It was weeks since Wulf had seen Karl, and

glad was he now to be going to him; for in his own mind he was sore perplexed in this matter of the new emperor's proclamation of the baron, and he longed for the armorer's wise and honest thought about it all.

"Thou hast seen this emperor of ours?" he said, as he sat in the doorway of the smithy, whence he could look at will within at the forge, or without adown a long green aisle of the forest.

"Ay," said Karl, proudly; "his own man-at-arms was I during the Holy War. Served him have I, and gripped his hand—the hand of an honest man and a sore-needed one in this land to-day."

"Dost think he can master the barons?" the boy asked; and Karl looked troubled.

"These be ill times for thought, boy," he said, "and worse for speech; but if the emperor bring not order into our midst, then, in truth, are the scoffers wise, and God hath forgotten us up in heaven."

"Would I were of his train!" Wulf said, gazing with troubled eyes adown between the black trunks of the great trees. Karl, watching him, gathered rightly that he was worried as to his duty.

"If he be in truth the emperor by will of the people," Wulf added at last, "then are all true men, who love Germany, bound to come to his banner."

"Ay."

"But I am of the Swartzburg's men; and how may I be an honest one and fail at this moment when every blade is needed?"

"'T is hard," Karl said, "and that only thine own heart can teach thee. No man may show another what his best action may be; but perhaps thou'rt nearer being the emperor's man than the baron's, were the truth known. If I guess rightly, 't were ill faring if one of thy line raised blade against Rudolf of Hapsburg." The armorer muttered this half in his beard, nor looked at Wulf as he spoke.

"Nay, Karl," the boy cried sharply; "make me no more riddles, but speak out plainly, man to man. What is all this that thou hast ever held from me? What mean'st thou by 'any of my line'?"

"Alas!" said the armorer, sadly. "Naught

know I, in truth, and there 's the heartbreak. 'T is a chain of which some links are missing. Would to God I did know, that I might speak of a surety that which my heart is settled upon. But this that I do know shalt thou hear to-day." And coming over by the doorway, Karl took

Banf, and no noise was ever made of who he was. Only this I know: that the sword Herr Banf gave me to put in order had been that stranger's, and none other was it than one forged by these own hands for Count Wulfstanger of Hartsburg when he rode with Count

Rudolf to Prussia, and he was our emperor's heart's friend. Three swords made I at that time, alike in temper and fashion, and one was for Count Wulfstanger; one was his who is now emperor; and one I kept and brought with me to this place—" Karl halted just here, but Wulf was too taken with the tale to note that.

"But thou knowest not that aught had I to do with that stranger knight," he urged, longing for Karl's answer.

"That do I not. But, lad, thou art as like the Count Otto von Wulfstanger as his own son might be; and how camest thou in the osiers just at that time? Oh, I have worn thin my poor wits over this thing. But naught have I been able to learn or guess. I did what I might, and if ever thou comest to thine own, and thine own be what I think—ah, boy, thou 'rt fit for it!" And the old armorer's face shone with



"THEN THE BARON GRIPPED HER BY THE ARM." (SEE PAGE 135.)

seat upon the great chest near by, and fell to telling Wulf of that which we already know—of his trip to the Swartzburg a dozen years before, and how he had taken him from the osiers.

"Never saw I that knight, nor aught dared I ever ask of him; but slain was he by Herr

loving pride as his eyes took in the figure in the doorway.

"Thanks to thee, good Karl, I can bear arms and sit a horse and hold mine honor clean," said Wulf, simply. "But oh, Karl, fain would I know the rights of this strange matter!"



He sighed, his thoughts going back to the castle, and to the memory of a fair small hand fluttering a ribband down over the heads of a rabble of scrambling youths. Truly, the tinker's lad, if such he was, was looking high.

"I wish that I might see that sword," he said at last.

"That thou shalt see."

The armorer arose from his seat on the chest, and turned toward the cupboard; but just then there showed, riding out from the forest and up to the door of the forge, two or three riders whom Wulf knew to be from Conrad's mongrel band of thieves and cutthroats.

They had with them a matter of work that, he quickly saw, would keep Karl busy for an hour or two; so, mindful of his errand and of the need to get back to the Swartzburg, where so great things were going on, he arose from the doorway.

What of loyalty and duty his mind might fix upon at last, he knew not yet; but the thought of one who in the trouble to come might be in danger drew him like a magnet. So, bidding Karl good-by, he went his way.

His mind was full of confused thoughts as he fared through the forest. The weighty matters that pressed upon his brain kept mind and heart engaged while he journeyed; but his duty seemed no clearer to him, when he had reached the castle, than it had seemed at the forge with Karl.

#### CHAPTER IX.

OF THE ILL NEWS THAT THE BARON BROKE  
TO HIS MAIDEN WARD, AND OF HOW SHE  
TOOK THAT SAME.

BARON EVERHARDT sat beside a table in the great hall of the castle, scowling blackly at a pile of weighty-seeming papers that lay before him. The baron could himself neither read nor write, but Father Franz, his confessor and penman, had been with him all forenoon, and together they had gone over the parchments, one by one, and the warrior noble had, to all seeming, found enough to keep his mind busy with them since.

The parchments were none other than the deeds in the matters of the estate of the baron's ward, Fräulein Elise von Hofenhoer, regarding

which estate the emperor had sent word that he should demand accounting after he had wrought order at the Swartzburg. The baron's face was not good to see when he recalled the words of the emperor's message.

"By the rood!" he muttered, bringing a clenched fist down on the table. "The poor Swiss count were wiser to busy himself with setting his own soul in order against coming to the Swartzburg."

He sprang from his chair and paced the floor wrathfully, when there entered to him his ward, whom he had sent to summon.

A stately slip of maidenhood was Elise—tall and fair, with fearless eyes of dark blue. She seemed older than her few years, and as she stood within the hall even the dark visage of the baron lightened at sight of her, and the growl of his voice softened in answering her greeting.

"There be many gruesome things in these hard days, Fräulein," he said, "and things that may easily work ill for a maid."

A startled look came into Elise's eyes, but naught said she, though the dread in her heart warned her what the baron's words might portend.

"Thou knowest," her guardian went on, "that thy father left thee in my care. Our good Hofenhoer! May he be at greater peace than we are like to know for many a long year!"

There was an oily smoothness in the baron's tone that did not ease the fear in Elise's heart.

Never had she known him to speak of her father, whom she could not remember, and, indeed, never before had he spoken to her at such length; for the baron was more at home in the saddle, or at tilt and foray, than with the women of his household. But he grew bland as any lawyer as he went on, with a gesture toward the parchments:

"These be all the matters of what property thy father left, though little enough of it have I been able to save for thee,—what with the wickedness of the times. And now this greedy thief of a robber-count who calls himself Emperor of Germany, forsooth, seems minded to take even that little—and thee into the bargain, belike—an we find not a way to hinder him."



"Take me?" Elise said, in some amaze, as the baron seemed waiting her word.

"Ay. The fellow hath proclaimed me outlaw, though, for that matter, do I as easily proclaim him interloper. So, doubtless, 't is even." And the baron smiled grimly.

"But that is by the way," he added, his bland air coming back. "I've sent for thee on a weightier matter, Fräulein, for war and evil are all around us. I am none so young as once I was, and no man knows what may hap when this Swiss count comes hunting the nobles of the land as he might chase wild dogs. 'T is plain thou must have a younger protector, and"—here the baron gave a snicker as he looked at Elise—"all maids be alike in this, I trow, that to none is a husband amiss. Is 't not so?"

Elise was by now turned white as death, and her slim fingers gripped hard on the chair-arms.

"What mean'st thou, sir?" she asked faintly.

The baron's uneasy blandness slipped away before his readier frown, yet still he smiled in set fashion.

"Said I not," he cried, with clownish attempt at lightness, "that all maids are alike? Well knowest thou my meaning. Yet wouldst thou question and hedge, like all the others. Canst be ready for thy marriage by the day after to-morrow? We must needs have thee a sheltered wife ere the Swiss hawk pounce upon thee and leave thee plucked. Moreover, thy groom waxes impatient these days."

"And who is he?" Elise almost whispered with lips made stiff by dread.

"Who, indeed," snarled the baron, losing his scant self-mastery, "but my nephew, to whom, as well thou knowest, thou hast been betrothed since thou wert a child?"

The maiden sprang wildly to her feet, then cowered back in her chair and hid her face in her hands.

"Conradt? Oh, never, never!" she moaned.

"Come, come," her guardian said, not unkindly. "Conradt is no beauty, I grant. God hath dealt hardly with him in a way that might well win him a maiden's pity," he added with a sham piousness that made Elise shiver.

"Thou must have a husband's protection," the baron went on. "Naught else will avail in these times, and 't was thy father's will."

"Nay, I believe not that," Elise cried, looking straight at him with flashing eyes. "Ne'er knew I my father, but 't were not in any father's heart, my lord, to will so dreadful a thing for his one daughter. Not so will I dishonor that brave nobleman's memory as to believe that this was his will for me."

The baron sprang up, dashing the parchments aside.

"Heed thy words, girl!" he roared. "Thy father's will or not thy father's will—thou 'lt wed my nephew on to-morrow's morrow."

Elise came a step nearer with a gesture of pleading.

"My lord," she said with earnest dignity, "ye cannot mean it! I am a poor, helpless maiden, with nor father nor brother to fend for me. Never canst thou mean to do me this wrong."

"'T is needful, girl," the baron said, keeping his eyes lowered. "This is no time for thee to be unwed. Thou must have a legal protector other than I. Only a husband can hold thy property from the emperor's greed—and perhaps save thee from eviler straits."

"Nay, who cares for the wretched stuff?" cried she, impatiently. "Ah, my lord, let it go. Take it, all of it, an ye will, and let me enter a convent—rather than this."

But for this the baron had no mind. Already had he turned his ward's property to his own use, and her marriage with Conradt was planned but that he might hide his theft from the knowledge of others. Well knew he how stern an accounting of his guardianship would be demanded, did Elise enter the shelter of a convent; but he only said:

"Thou art not of age. Thou canst not take so grave a step. The law will not let thee consent."

"Then how may I consent to this other?"

"To this I consent for thee, minx. Let that suffice, and go about thy preparations."

"I cannot! I cannot! Oh, Herr Baron, dost thou not fear God? As he lives, I will never do this thing!"

Then the baron gripped her by the arm.

"Now, miss," he said, his face close to hers, "enough of folly. Yet am I master at the Swartzburg, and two days of grace have I

granted thee. But a word more, and Father Franz shall make thee a bride this night if thy thieving cur of a bridegroom show his face in the castle. See, now; naught canst thou gain by thy stubborn unreason. I can have patience with a maid's whims, but if thou triest me too greatly, it will go hard but that I shall find a way to break thy stubborn will. Now get yonder and prepare thy bridal robes." And he strode away.

Elise turned and fled from that place, scarce noting whither she went. Not back to the women's chambers. She could not face the baroness and her ladies until she had faced this monstrous trouble alone.

Out she sped, then, to the castle garden, fleeing, poor, hunted fawn that she was, to the one spot of refuge she knew, the sheltering shade of a drooping elm, at whose foot welled up a little stream that, husbanded and led by careful gardening, wandered through the pleasance to water my lady's rose-garden beyond. There had ever been her favorite dreaming-place, and thither brought she this great woe where-with she must wrestle. But ere she could cast herself down upon the welcoming moss at the roots of the tree, a figure started up from within the shadow of the great black trunk, and came toward her.

She started back with a startled cry, wondering, even then, that aught could cause her

trouble or dismay beyond what was already hers. In the next instant, however, she recognized Wulf. He was passing through the garden, and had been minded to turn aside for a moment to sit beneath the elm where he knew



"ONE HOUR PAST MIDNIGHT, AND ALL 'S WELL!"

the fair lily of the castle had her favorite nook. But he was even then departing, when he was aware of Elise coming toward him.

Then he saw her face, all distraught with pain and sorrow, and wrath filled him.

"Who hath harmed thee?" he cried. "'T were an ill faring for him an I come nigh him."

"Wulf, Wulf!" moaned Elise, as soon as she knew him. "Surely Heaven hath sent thee to help me!" And standing there under the sheltering tree, she told him, as best she might for shame and woe and the maidenly wrath that were hers, the terrible doom fallen upon her.

And Wulf's face grew stern and white as he listened, and there fell off from it the boyish look of ease and light-heartedness that is the right of youth, and the look of a man came there instead.

Now and again, as Elise spoke, his hand sought the dagger at his belt, and his breath came thick from beneath his teeth; but no words wasted he in wrath, for his wit was working fast on the matter before them, which was the finding of a way of escape for the maiden.

"There is but one way for it," he said at last, "and that must be this very night, for this business of the emperor's coming makes every moment beyond the present one a thing of doubt. It cannot be before midnight, though, that I may help thee; for till then I guard the postern-gate, and I may not leave that which is intrusted me. But after that, do thou make shift to come to me here, and, God helping us, thou 'lt be far from here ere daybreak."

"But whither can I go?" Elise cried, shrinking in terror from the bold step. "How may a maiden wander forth into the night?"

"That is a simple matter," said Wulf. "Where, indeed, but to the Convent of St. Ursula, beyond the wood? Thou 'lt be safe there, for the lady superior is blood kin to the emperor, and already is the place under protection of his men. Even if he think to seek thee there, our wild baron would pause before going against those walls."

"'T is a fair chance," said Elise, at last, "but if 't were still worse, 't were better worth trying, even to death, than to live unto to-morrow's morrow and what 't will bring"; and a shudder shook her till she sobbed with grief.

The time was too short even for much planning, while many things remained to be done; so Elise sought her own little nest in the castle wing, there to make ready for flight, while Wulf took pains to show himself as usual about the tasks wherewith he was wont to fill his hours.

## CHAPTER X.

### HOW WULF TOOK ELISE FROM THE SWARTZBURG.

It was a little past midnight, and the air was black and soft as velvet, when two figures crept across the inner bailey and gained the outer court of the castle. Feeling by hand and foot along the walls, Wulf led, while Elise crept after him, holding fast by his sleeve, till at last they were at the postern-gate.

"Gotta Brent's son followed me on watch here," he whispered to Elise. "He is a sleepy fellow, and will not have got well settled to the tramp yet."

"Thou 'lt not harm him, Wulf?" she breathed back anxiously. "Ne'er again could I be happy if any hurt comes to an innocent person through me."

"Nay, let thy heart be easy," replied Wulf. "I will but fix him in easy position for the sleep he loves. He were no fellow to be put on watch in time of danger."

Just then the clank of metal came to their ears, and they knew that the sentinel was drawing near on his beat.

Close back they pressed into the deep shadow of the bastion, while Elise put both hands over her heart in an instinct to muffle its wild beating.

Almost beside them, lantern in hand, the watch paused; but his body was between them and his light, and its rays did not shine into the bastion.

He bent toward them, and Wulf braced himself to spring upon him, when of a sudden a call rang out from the sentinel on the watch-tower far adown the wall.

"One hour past midnight, and all 's well," it said; and the sentinel beside them took it up, bellowing out the words until they sounded fair awful coming out of the darkness. From elsewhere the watch-cry sounded again, and ere it had clean died away Wulf gave a forward spring, catching the sentinel just as he was turning to walk adown his beat.

In a flash the sleepy watchman had received a blow from his own staff that quieted him. Then, dashing out the lantern, Wulf, as best he could in the darkness, thrust a soft leathern

gag into the man's mouth, making it fast by cords to the back of his head. Then he bound him hand and foot, and taking from the fellow's girdle the key of the postern, he grasped Elise's hand, and together they made out to open the gate and creep forth.

Between them and liberty there yet lay the ditch; but Wulf knew where the warden's boat was tied, and he managed to get Elise into the small craft. By now a few stars shone through the darkness, lighting them, feebly enough, to the other side, and presently the pair had clambered again ahead.

"Now for it," whispered Wulf. "Gird thy skirts well, for if we win away now, 't will be by foot-fleetness."

Bravely Elise obeyed him, and taking her hand again, Wulf led off at a long, low run, none too hard for her prowess, yet getting well over the ground. Thus they began descending the defile. It was cruel work for a tender maid, but Elise was of such stuff as in years gone had made warrior queens; she neither moaned nor flinched, but kept steady pace at Wulf's side.

Thus they fared for a matter of two or three miles, and had gotten well away down the pass when they caught, on the still night air, an alarum of horns from the castle. Plainly something was astir, and that, most likely, the discovery that some one had come or gone by the postern-gate.

"The boat will soon tell them which 't is," said Wulf, "and they 'll be after us full soon."

They quickened pace, and sped down the stony road, Wulf with an arm about the maiden's waist, that he might lift her along, she with a hand on his shoulder, bravely keeping the pace.

By now they were beyond the steepest of the way, and near to where the stream that kept it company toward the valley widened over the plain for some miles in a sedgy, grass-tufted morass, with here and there clumps of wild bog-willow and tall reeds.

The noise of pursuit sounded loud and terrible behind them, till they could almost tell the different voices of the men. Then, without warning, over the crest of the mountains towering up on one side rose the late moon, full and lambent, flooding the whole scene with light.

"Quick, quick!" cried Wulf, and fairly lifting his companion, he swung down the rocks that edged the cliff, sliding, slipping, scrambling, still holding her safe, until, with a spring, they gained the shelter of the willows.

There they lay breathless for a moment, while above them a party of horsemen swept by in full cry.

"They will soon be back," said Wulf. "We must e'en pick our way over yonder, Elise."

"We can never!" gasped the girl, almost in despair.

"That were a long day," answered Wulf, easily. "I wot not if any other man from the castle can do it, but well know I how it can be done."

Stooping, he lifted Elise in his strong arms, and resting her light weight on shoulder and chest, went lightly forward, now stepping upon a ready islet of green just showing in the moonlight, now plunging almost waist-deep in water below which other trips had taught him was foothold, but never stopping until he drew near the other side. Then, sore wearied, he raised Elise that she might lay hold on some overhanging boughs and swing herself up among them, after which Wulf crawled ashore and lay panting, while Elise bent over him, calling him softly by name, and taking blame to herself for all his weariness.

He did but wait to get his breath, however; then, as they heard the hue and cry of the returning horsemen, he started up again. Freshened by their short rest, they plunged into the forest.

Well was it for them that Wulf knew, as some men to-day know their home cities, the wayless depths of that wood. With the sureness of a hiving bee, he led Elise through the great tree-aisles. Here and there, where boughs were thinner, the moon's rays sifted in, but for the most part it was fair dark, until, after long travel, as they came to a little bit of open where ancient forest fire had cleared the trees, they saw that the moonlight had given place to the first gray tint of dawn.

On they went for yet another hour, and now it was clear daylight, when, sounding through the woods, came again the noise of horsemen. Evidently the baron's men had skirted the

stream and struck through the forest. For all the fugitives knew, they might show before them any moment now.

"Wulf," cried Elise, "do thou leave me here. I can go no further; but go thou on. I will stay to meet them. They dare not kill me,—would they did!—but if I stay and go back with them to the castle, thou canst escape, and thy death will not be at my charge."

"Hush!" Wulf answered almost roughly. "Dost think I will do thy bidding in this? But here is no place to hide. We must get on, if we may, where the bush is thicker; so hearten thyself for one more trial."

His arm once more on her waist, they ran on, she sobbing with weariness and fear for him, through the forest.

But nearer and nearer, louder and more clear, came the noise of their pursuers, and still more feebly ran the tired pair, stumbling over fallen boughs and matted tangles of dead leaves.

"Wulf, I am like to die of weariness," gasped Elise, at last. "Go on alone, I beg thee."

"Hark!" Wulf interrupted, with a quick gesture. "What is that?"

They were at the edge of another open, which they were minded to skirt, fearful to cross it and risk discovery; but beyond it came the sound of still another body of horsemen crashing through the forest.

"Belike the party have divided," Wulf whispered, "the better to find us." But even as he spoke a squire rode from the bush into the open, bearing a banner that Wulf had never before seen. He shrank back into the thicket, keeping tight hold of Elise's hand; but the newcomer had evidently ridden out by mistake from the body of his fellows, and retired again by the way he came. They could hear him going on through the brush.

"They are not Swartzburg riders," Wulf said; and then a mighty din arose among the trees. The woods rang on all sides with the cries of fighting-men and the clashing of weapons, and in another moment Wulf made out clearly the battle-cry of Baron Everhardt's men. But above it and all the din of fighting there rose another cry,—*"For God and the emperor!"*—so that he knew that a party of Rudolf's men, if not his whole army, had fallen in with the

pursuers, and his hot young blood stirred with longing to be in the fray.

Then he bethought him of the matter at hand.

"Now, now, Elise, this is our chance! We must be off. One more dash and we shall be well on our way to the convent."

He pressed to her lips an opened bottle filled with goat's milk, urging her to drink, and when she had done so, she looked up at him with fresh courage in her eyes.

"I am ready," she said, rising.

He stopped the bottle and secured it at his belt, and again they went on, dashing forward, unmindful of any noise they might make when all the wood was so full of direful sound. The new hope that had come to Elise gave her fresh strength, so that it seemed to her as if she had but just begun to run.

In this fashion they traveled on until at last Wulf halted in the deepest depth of the great forest.

"We shall be safe to rest here," he said, still speaking softly, "while we break our fast."

## CHAPTER XI.

### HOW THE FUGITIVES CAME TO ST. URSULA AND MET THE EMPEROR.

THE milk was still sweet, and being young, wholesome creatures, the two made out to take the food and drink they needed, and were afterward able to go on their way, warily, but steadily, through the woods.

Nevertheless, it was close upon nightfall when the convent walls showed gray before them where the woods had been cleared away.

All was bustle and confusion there. The close was full of armed men, and about the stables and courtyards were many great war-horses, while grooms and men-at-arms ran to and fro on divers errands, or busied themselves about the horses and their gear. Altogether the scene was one of such liveliness as Wulf had never dreamed the convent could take on.

At the little barred window of the cloister gate where he knocked with Elise, a lay sister was in waiting, who told them the reason of all this business. The new emperor, with his train, was the convent's guest. That night he would



bide there, awaiting the coming of the bulk of his army, wherewith later he meant to attack the Swartzburg. The sister admitted our travelers, and took Elise straight to the mother superior, leaving Wulf to find the way, which well he knew, to the kitchen.

The emperor and the mother superior were together in the latter's little reception-room when Elise was brought before them, trembling and shy, as a maiden might well be in the presence of royalty and of churchly dignity; but the mother superior, though she had never seen the little maid, called her by name, the lay sister having made it known, and turned with her to the emperor.

"This, sire," she said, "is the child of your old friend Von Hofenhoer, and sometime ward of our baron, who, I fear, is ill prepared to make accounting of his stewardship. But why she is here I know not yet, save that the sister tells me that she was brought here a refugee from the castle by the grandson of old Karl of the forge—he of whom you were asking but now."

The emperor was a tall, lean man, with eagle-like visage, clean-shaven and stern. His long, straight hair fell down on either side of his gaunt face, and his eyes were bright and keen. He was plainly, almost meanly dressed. Nevertheless, he was of right kingly aspect, and, moreover, despite his stern looks, he smiled kindly as he placed a hand on Elise's bowed head.

"Thy father was my good comrade, child," he said, "and sorry am I to see his daughter in such plight; but thou shalt tell us about it presently, and we shall see what is to be done."

The lay sister returned, bearing some wine and a plate of biscuits; and seating her in an arm-chair, the mother superior bade Elise partake of these, which she did gladly. When she had finished, the two dignitaries, who were own cousins and old friends, drew from her, little by little, the story of her flight from the castle, and of her reasons therefor.

As the emperor heard her tell of the baron's cruel demand, he paced up and down the little stone-floored room, now frowning sternly, now softening again as he looked upon the fair young maiden, so spent with fear and hardship.

"This is bad work," he said at last, "and well is it that we have come to clean out the jackal's nest. But this boy Wulf whom she speaks of, he must be here yet. Him I would see—and our good old Karl. Would he were here now!"

So Wulf was summoned before the great emperor, and came with swift-beating heart. Brought face to face with Rudolf, he fell upon one knee, cap in hand, and waited the monarch's will.

When the latter spoke it was with great kindness; for well was he pleased with the goodly looking youth.

"Rise," he said, when he had glanced keenly over the kneeling figure. "And so thou'rt my old friend Karl's grandson. If there's aught in blood, thou shouldst be an honest man and a brave; for truer nor braver man ever lived, and well knows Rudolf of Hapsburg that."

A thousand thoughts and impulses surged through Wulf's brain while the emperor spoke, but the moment seemed none for speech, other than that with which he finally contented himself, saying simply:

"He brought me up, sire."

"And that is thy good fortune," cried the emperor. "But tell me when I may have speech of my friend; for there is a matter hath brought me hither that needeth his help, though I knew not that he were even alive until the mother superior here told me of his presence hereabout. Well knew she how Rudolf loved his ancient man-at-arms."

"If he knew what was afoot," Wulf said respectfully, "he would be here now to honor the emperor. Readily could I take him a message, your Majesty," he added.

"That were well done," began Rudolf. But Mother Ursula interrupted.

"Nay," she said; "the baron's men belike are even now scouring the country for the boy. 'T were the price of his life to send him forth again, at least till the Swartzburg is taken."

"True enough," said the emperor. "In faith, my longing in this matter hath made me forgetful. Well, I must e'en seek another messenger."

"If I might go, sire," Wulf persisted, with manly modesty that still further won Rudolf's



straightforward heart, "no messenger could go so quickly as I—by ways I know that are quite safe. I can fare back now, and be there by daylight."

"By the rood, no!" cried the emperor. "Thou shalt rest some hours ere we think further of this. There's none too much such timber as thou in the land, that we should be in haste to fell it. Get thee now to refreshment and rest, and if we need thee thou shalt know it."

Thus dismissed, Wulf was fain to be content with retiring; and despite his anxiety to serve the emperor, who had won the boy's whole loyal heart, right glad was he, after a hearty supper, to go to bed. So, when he was shown, at last, into the traveler's dormitory, he threw himself down upon the hard cot spread for him, and fell at once into a deep sleep.

## CHAPTER XII.

### HOW WULF TOOK THE EMPEROR'S MESSAGE TO KARL OF THE FORGE.

It still wanted an hour of daybreak when the convent porter bent over the pallet where Wulf lay and shook the boy into wakefulness.

Mother Ursula and the emperor were still talking when Wulf, having knocked at the door of the little reception-room, answered the former's call to enter. To all appearance, neither had taken any rest since Wulf had last seen them, and so eagerly was the emperor talking that neither paid any heed to the boy as he stood waiting their pleasure.

"He was known to have ridden hither," Rudolf was saying, "and to have brought the boy. He was minded to leave him with you, my lady, against his going again to Jerusalem; but no word ever came from either. Right gladly would I lay down the crown, that is proving overburdensome to my poor head, to set eyes upon the face of either."

The emperor paced the floor sadly, his stern, homely face drawn by emotion.

"He would have sought out Karl, had he known," Rudolf went on. "I must see the man. Ah, here is the boy!"

He turned, seeing the boy, who advanced and did knee service. Rudolf bade him rise.

"So," the emperor said, "we are going to use thy stout legs, boy. Make thou their best speed to thy grandsire, and tell him that Count Rudolf rides to the Swartzburg and would have him at hand. Canst do that?"

"Ay, sire."

"But stay," said Rudolf. "Haply he has grown too feeble for bearing arms?"

Wulf flushed with indignation for stalwart Karl.

"Nay," he said stoutly. "He will carry what weapon thou wilt, and enter the castle close behind thee."

"Sh!" cried Mother Ursula, shocked at the boy's speech. "Thou'rt speaking to the emperor, lad!"

Rudolf laughed. "Let the boy alone," he said. "One may speak freely to whom he will of a man like Karl. Now hasten," the emperor said kindly, "'t is time thou wast on the way,—and God be with thee!"

And Wulf went forth.

As he passed through the refectory the porter handed him some food, which he put into his wallet, and filling his leathern water-bottle at the fountain in the convent yard, he fastened it to his belt and swung out on his journey.

By now had come dawn, and the birds were beginning their earliest twitter among the trees. Later, squirrels and other small wood-creatures began to move about, and to chatter among the boughs and in the fallen leaves. The forest was full of pleasant sights and sounds, and the early morning breeze brought sweet, woody smells to his eager nostrils.

By and by a red fox stole across an open with a plump hare flung back over his shoulder, and Wulf gave challenge for sheer joy of life and of the morning. Reynard paused long enough to give him a slant glance out of one wise eye, then trotted on. Long pencils of early sunlight began to write cheery greetings on the mossy earth and on the tree-trunks. The witchery of the hour was upon everything, and Wulf felt boundlessly happy as he stepped along. All his thoughts were vague and sweet—of Elise safe at the convent, doubtless still sleeping; of the emperor's gracious kindness; of Karl's joy at the message he was bringing; even the sorry medley of half-knowledge about

his own name and state had no power to make him unhappy that morning.

Not but that he longed to know the truth. He had never been ashamed to think of himself as Karl's grandson; but the bare idea of something other than that set his blood tingling, and caused such wild hopes to leap within him that but for the need to walk warily, on this errand so fraught with danger, he could have shouted and sung for joy.

He went on steadily, stopping but once, in the middle of the forenoon, to eat a bit of bread and to refill his water-bottle at a clear, pure stream which he crossed.

Traveling thus, bent now only upon his errand, he never saw the stealthy shadow that, mile after mile, kept pace with him beyond the thicket, dodging when he paused, moving when he moved, until, satisfied as to where he was going, the evil thing hurried back over the way to keep tryst with a master as evil, and to carry to Conradt the welcome news that the tinker had gone alone back to the forge, where quick work might surprise and catch him.

It was the middle of the afternoon when he reached the forge and found Karl, who stared at sight of him.

"I'd dreamed thou wast safe away, boy," he said, shaking him lovingly by the broad shoulders. "What madness is this? The baron's men have been here for thee, and thy life is worth naught if they find thee. Why art thou so foolhardy, son?"

"Count Rudolf is at St. Ursula's, and sends for thee," Wulf said, laughing at his fears.

Karl turned on the instant, and seized a great sword that lay on the anvil.

"Say'st so? And thou hast seen the count?—I mean the emperor? How looked he? What said he? And he remembered old Karl? Ah, his was ever a true heart!" The rough face was alight with loving, excited pride.

"Give me a bite to eat, and we'll fare back together," Wulf said; but Karl became anxious again.

"Nay," he said. "Thou 'st escaped the baron's wolves this time, but by now they swarm the woods. Moreover, thou art tired out. Bide thee in hiding here. They will never dream that thou art simple enough to

come aback to the forge at this time. Here is thy best refuge now. Rest, then, and by to-morrow the emperor's men will have harried them all back to the castle to defend the place."

To Wulf this word seemed wise, and fain was he to rest, being footsore and weary; so he busied himself with helping Karl make ready.

At last Karl went to the cupboard beside the forge, and opening it, lifted out the shining knight's sword.

"This is the blade I have told ye of, lad," he said,—“the very one; for I gave Herr Banf mine own, that had never seen battle and kept this one for thee.”

He ran his thumb along the keen edge. "Mayhap thou 'st no claim on earth to it," he said, "yet no man hath showed a better, and thou 'lt give it play for the emperor, whose service owns it. So take it, Wulf. But, lad, lad," he cried, "as thou lov'st God and this poor lost land, remember 't was a brave and a true man first carried that sword 'gainst foe!"

"Ay, ay, Karl, I will remember," said Wulf, solemnly, taking the sword in hand. Karl had fitted it with a plain, strong scabbard, and it was ready for stout and worthy deeds. A thrill went through the boy as he girt it to him, and silently, within his own mind, he vowed that blade to knightly and true service, and hid it high up behind the forge till the time should come for him to wield it.

Then Karl bade him good-by, and stepped forth through the woods to do the emperor's bidding.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### HOW DANGER CAME TO WULF AT THE FORGE.

ONCE Karl was gone, Wulf set to work to cook some food for himself over the forge fire, and when he had eaten he was about to throw himself down upon the armorer's pallet to seek the rest he so much needed, but suddenly his quick ear caught some slight noise in the forest.

He sprang up, and waited to hear further.

Sure enough; all too plainly, through the trees, but still far off, could be heard the sound of horsemen.

Softly closing the door behind him, Wulf

sprang to the great oak, his friend and shelter in childhood and boyhood, now his haven in deadly peril. Easily he swung himself up, higher and higher, until he was safe among the thick foliage of the broad, spreading top. So huge were the branches, even here, that a man might stand beneath and look up at the very one where Wulf lay, yet never dream that aught were hidden there.

The baron himself was of the party who rode up around the smithy just as Wulf was settled in his place. Straight to the door he strode, and with the head of his battle-ax struck it a blow that sent it inward on its hinges.

One or two men bearing torches sprang into the house, and the single room became suddenly alight; but no one showed there. Hastily they searched the place, while the baron, from the doorway, roared forth his orders, sending one man here, another yonder, to be at the thicket and scour all the places. One even came under the great tree and held up his torch, throwing the light high aloft, but seeing naught of Wulf.

Then the baron laughed savagely.

"This be thy chase, nephew Conradt," he jeered. "Said I not he would never be here? The armorer's whelp is a hangman's rogue fast enough, but no fool to blunder hither once he were safe away with the girl." And mounting, the company raced, flockmeal, away from the place, so that soon not one remained, nor any sound from them came back upon the wind.

Nevertheless, Wulf deemed it best not to venture down, but lay along a great bough of the oak-tree, and at last fell into a doze that lasted until daylight. Even then, when he would have descended, his quick ears caught the sound of passers at no great distance off; so he kept his hiding-place hour after hour, until at last, when the sun shining upon the tree-tops told him that the noon was close at hand, all seemed so still that he swung himself down, stiffly, for he was cramped and sore, and gained the ground.

But at that moment again came the sound of approaching men, and from all the openings about the clearing appeared horsemen and foot-soldiers, while from beyond rose the noise of horses and armor, and of men's voices.

Springing up aloft to gain his sword, and

then to the door, Wulf stood at bay, blade in hand, meaning to sell his life dearly, rather than be taken, when a voice that he knew was raised, and Karl the armorer shouted:

"Nay, lad! an thou 'rt a loyal German, give thine emperor better homage than that!" And, through all his weariness and daze, Wulf made out to come forward and kneel at the emperor's stirrup.

They were friends, not foes, who had come this time.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### OF THE GREAT BATTLE THAT WAS FOUGHT, AND OF HOW WULF SAVED THE DAY.

Now were Wulf's anxieties well over; for this great company of riders and foot-soldiers were none other than the main part of the Emperor Rudolf's army, that had ridden on that day from St. Ursula's wood, and the emperor's will was that to-morrow should see the attack begun on the Swartzburg.

They were still an hour's march from the place set for resting that night, where would gather to them a smaller body that had come by another way, minded to meet with a company of riders from the castle, known to be thereabout. So, when he had spoken kindly to young Wulf, for whose sake, indeed, the troop had made their way lie past the forge, Rudolf of Hapsburg bade the boy fall in with the men, and the whole company again went forward.

Getting for himself a good bow and arrow from the smithy, Wulf fell in with the ranks of footmen, and then was he amazed to find that his right-hand neighbor was Hansei, from the Swartzburg.

Right pleased was he at the discovery, though well he wondered what it might mean, and he made haste to ask Hansei about the matter. Then did he hear how, two days before, a company of knights and others from the castle, riding in chase of Elise and himself, had fallen in with an outriding party of Rudolf's men, and there had been fighting.

"Ay," said Wulf, remembering, "and there at hand were we when that fighting began."

"Glad am I that we knew it not," Hansei cried, "for the most part of the emperor's men were slain or taken prisoner, and few escaped to

carry word to the convent. But with them ran I, for I had small stomach to fight 'gainst the lawful rulers of this land, and thou a hunted man beside."

Then did Hansei ask Wulf of his faring in the woods, whereupon Wulf, as they marched, told him all the story.

So talking, the two kept pace with the marching company, until, by nightfall, they came up with the other party, and camp was made, well on the road toward the Swartzburg.

No fires were built, for Rudolf of Hapsburg was minded, if possible, to come close before the castle gates ere those within were aware; but every man cared for his own needs as best he might, and before long the whole host was sleeping, save for the watchers.

It was nigh upon daybreak when a wild alarm went through the camp. Every man sprang to his feet and grasped his weapon as he ran forward in the darkness to learn what the matter was. The cries of men, the clashing of weapons and armor, the shrill screams of wounded horses, came up on every side, while so dark was it that for a little time the emperor's soldiers scarce knew friend from foe as they pressed on, half dazed.

Soon, however, they made shift to form their array in some sort of order, and there in the forest began a mighty battle.

For the baron, filled with vanity and wrath, and made foolhardy by the easy victory his men had won over Rudolf's soldiers two days before, had planned this night attack, knowing, through Conrad's spies, where the emperor's army were lying, and had deemed that it would be a light matter to set upon that force in the darkness, and destroy it, man and horse.

But Baron Everhardt had believed that that smaller body which the spies had seen and brought him word of was the main army, and so the men of the Swartzburg had all unthinkingly walked into a trap where they had been minded to set one.

Sharp and grim, now, the fighting went on, sword meeting sword, pike striking spear, as knight met knight or common soldier alike in the confusion. Above all the din rang out the battle-cries of the two parties, the Swartzburg men ever meeting the royal war-cry, "God

and the emperor!" with their own ringing watchword, "The Swartzburg and liberty!" until the whole wood seemed filled with the sound.

In the midst of the fray went Rudolf of Hapsburg, with his great two-handed sword, clearing a way for those behind him. No armor wore he, save a light shirt of chain mail, and no shield save his helmet; but beside him fought Karl the armorer, with a huge battle-ax, so that Wulf, catching glimpse of him in the press at day-dawn, felt a great joy fill his heart at sight of that good soldier.

Not long could he look, however, for he and Hansei were in the thick of it, well to the fore, where Rudolf's banner-bearer had his place. In the close quarters there was no work for the bowmen, so Wulf fought with the sword that Karl had given him the day before, and a goodly blade he found it, while Hansei wielded a great pike that he had wrested from one of the baron's men, and laid about him lustily wherever a foe showed.

So the hours passed; and many men were slain on either side, when it began to be felt by the emperor's soldiers that the Swartzburg men were slowly falling back toward the defile, to gain the castle.

"If they do that," Hansei gasped, as he met Wulf again, "a long and weary siege will we have to make; for thou well knowest the Swartzburg's strength, and well hath the baron made ready."

Then to Wulf came a right war-craftly notion, which he told to Hansei, whereupon the two set to gather to them some scores or more of the young men, and these fell back toward the edge of the battle, until they were out of the press, and hastened through the wood, as only Wulf knew how to lead them.

They came at last to the morass, not far from where he and Elise had crossed that night when they fled from the castle.

"There is never a crossing there!" Hansei cried, aghast, when he saw the place; but Wulf laughed.

"Crossing there is," he said lightly, "so that ye all follow me softly, stepping where I step. Mind ye do that, for beyond the willows and the pool yonder is quicksand, and that



"WITH HIS BATTLE-AX THE BARON STRUCK THE DOOR A BLOW THAT SENT IT INWARD." (SEE PAGE 143.)  
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means death, for no footing is there for any helper."

Thus warned, the young men looked at one another uneasily; but none fell back; so, unseen by the foe, and noting well each step that Wulf made, at last they won clear across that treacherous morass, and came safe a-land again among the osiers, well up the pass toward the Swartzburg.

More than an hour they waited there, and by and by the sound of battle began swelling up the defile. The baron's men were in retreat, but fighting stoutly as they fell back, pressed close by the foe. Already had the baron wound his horn, loud and long, and cheerily was it answered from the watch-tower with a blast which told that the keepers there were in readiness, and that open gates and safe shelter awaited the retreating men—when out at their backs sprang Wulf and his fellows, and fell upon them, right and left.

Then wild confusion was on all. Those attacked at the rear pressed forward upon their comrades, who knew not what had happened, but drove them back again to meet the swords and pikes of those lusty young men, who made the most of the foes' surprise, and cut down many a seasoned warrior ere he could well learn how he was beset.

Then the baron sounded his horn again, and out from the castle came all of the Swartzburg's

reserve to the rescue, and Wulf and his little band were in turn beset, and like to be destroyed, had not Rudolf himself, now riding his great war-horse, and followed close by Karl, cut a way through the Swartzburg ranks to their aid.



"RUDOLF HIMSELF, NOW RIDING HIS GREAT WAR-HORSE, AND FOLLOWED CLOSE BY KARL, CUT A WAY THROUGH THE SWARTZBURG RANKS."

By now the fighting was man to man, pell-mell, all up the pass, and so confused was that mass of battling soldiery that friend and foe of the Swartzburg pressed together across the draw and in through the castle gates, fighting as fight a pack of wolves when one is down.

Then above all the din sounded Herr Banf's

voice, calling the men of the Swartzburg to the baron; and there, against the wall of the outer bailey, made they their last stand. Well had Baron Everhardt fought among his men, but at last a well-hurled spear thrown from one of the emperor's soldiers pierced his helm as he was rallying his friends, and there he fell.

Quickly Herr Banf and Herr Werner took him up and bore him within the inner bailey, while without the fighting went on. But the castle's men fought half-heartedly now; for their leader was gone, and well knew they that they were battling against their lawful emperor. So, ere long, all resistance fell away, and the emperor and his men poured, unhindered, into the courtyard.

The Swartzburg was taken.

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### HOW THE SHINING KNIGHT'S TREASURE WAS BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

It was high noon when the last of the knights of the Swartzburg had laid down his arms at the feet of the emperor and had sworn fealty to him. Of the castle's company Herr Banf alone was missing; for he had ridden forth, in the confusion that followed the entrance of Rudolf's men, to make his way through the woods and thence out from that land, minded rather to live an outlaw than to bend knee to the foe of his well-loved friend.

A wise ruler as well as a brave soldier was Rudolf of Hapsburg, and well knew he how to win, as well as to conquer. So, when all the knights had taken oath, to each was returned his arms, and then the emperor greeted him as friend.

Within the castle hall the dead master lay at rest, and beside him watched the baroness, a pale, broken-spirited lady, whose life had been one long season of fear of her liege lord, and who felt, now, as little sorrow as hope. The emperor had already visited her, to pay her respect and to assure her of protection, and now, with the two or three women of that stern and wild household of men-folk, she waited what might come.

Meanwhile, through castle and stables and offices the emperor's appointed searchers went,

taking note of all things; but Rudolf of Hapsburg sat in the courtyard, in sight of his men, who were by now making shift to prepare themselves a meal; for the greater number had not tasted food that day.

To Wulf the whole changed scene seemed like a dream; so familiar the place, yet so strange—as one in dreams finds some well known place puzzling him by some unwonted aspect. He stood watching the soldiers feeding here and there about the bailey, when there came two squires from the keep, leading between them a bent and piteous figure.

It was a man who cowed and blinked, and sought to cover his dazzled eyes from the unwonted light of day. Him the soldiers brought before the emperor, and on the moment Wulf knew that face to be the one which he had seen at the barred window of the keep on that day when he had climbed the tower.

"What is this?" demanded Rudolf, as he looked the woeful figure up and down. Scarce bore it likeness to a man, so unkempt and terrible was its aspect, so drawn and wan the face, wherein no light of reason showed.

"We know not, your Majesty," one of the squires replied; "but we found him in a cell high up in the keep, chained by the ankle to a stone bench, and I broke the fetter with a sledge."

By now the nobles and knights of Rudolf's army were gathered about; but none spoke, for pity. Then the emperor caused all the knights of the Swartzburg to be summoned, and he questioned them close, but not one of them knew who the man might be, or why he was a prisoner at the Swartzburg. Indeed, of all the company, only one or two knew that such a prisoner had been held in the keep. Of the two men who might have told his name, one lay dead in the great hall, and one, Herr Banf, was riding from the Swartzburg, an outlaw.

But the emperor was troubled.

A haunting something in that seemingly empty face drew his very heartstrings, and made him long to know the man's name. And then suddenly through the press of knights and nobles rushed forth Karl the armorer, and clasped the woeful figure in his arms, while Karl himself trembled and sobbed with wrath and sorrow.

"See, my lord!" he cried, bringing the man closer before Rudolf. "Look upon this man! Knowest thou not who 't is?"

The emperor had grown very white, and he sighed as he passed one hand over his eyes.

So white now was the emperor that his face was like death, but the lines of it were set in fierce wrath, too, as, little by little, he began to see that Karl might be right. He bent forward and laid a hand on the man's shoulder.



"THE EMPEROR LAID HIS DRAWN SWORD ACROSS WULF'S BOWED SHOULDERS."

"Nay," he said, "it is never—it cannot be—"

"Ah, my lord, my lord!" sobbed the armorer, his great chest heaving, and the tears streaming down from his unashamed eyes. "It is the count—Count Otto himself, thine old comrade, whom thou and I didst love. Look upon him, and thou wilt know him!"

"Otto, friend Otto!" he called loudly, that the dulled senses might take in his words. "Otto, dost know me?"

Slowly the other looked up; a dim light seemed to gather in his eyes.

"Ay, Rudolf," he whispered hoarsely; then the light went out, and he shrank back again.

"There is a tale I would have told your

Majesty," Karl said, recovering himself, "if the herald had not come just as he did on the night before last." And then, seeing Wulf in the throng, he called him to come forward.

Wondering, the boy obeyed, while, with a hand on his arm, Karl told the emperor all that he had been able to tell Wulf that day at the forge — of the battle between the knights, of how he had thereafter found the stranger child in the osiers, and how he had kept the blade that Herr Banf had won.

"Now know I of surety," he said at last, "that that knight was Count Otto von Wulfstanger, but who this boy may be I can only guess."

Now a voice spoke from amid the throng. Hansei, who had been edging nearer and nearer, could keep silence no longer.

"He must be the 'shining knight's' treasure! Well I remember it, your Majesty!" he cried.

"What meanest thou?" demanded Rudolf; and there, before them all, Hansei told what the children had seen from the playground on the plateau that day, so many years ago.

The emperor's face grew thoughtful as he looked at Wulf from under lowered brows.

"Ay," he said at last. "T is like to be true. Count Otto rode this way with his child, meaning to leave him with our cousin at St. Ursula; for his mother was dead, and he was off to the Holy Land. He must have missed the convent road and got on the wrong way. Thou art strongly like him in looks, lad."

His voice was shaking, but Wulf noted it not; for he had drawn near to Karl, who was bending over the wan prisoner. The boy's heart was nearly broken with pity.

Was this his father, this doleful figure now resting against Karl, wholly unable to support itself? Gently Wulf pressed the armorer back and took the slight weight in his strong young arms. "T is mine to have charge of him, if ye all speak truth," he said.

Few were the dry eyes in that company as Wulf clasped the frail body to him and the weary head rested against his breast.

"See that he is cared for," the emperor said at last, and from the throng came the noblest of those knights to carry the count into the castle. Wulf would have gone with them, but just then the emperor called him back.

"Stand forth," he said, pointing to a spot just before him, and Wulf obeyed.

"Thou hast fought well to-day, boy," Rudolf went on. "But for thy ready wit, that led thy fellows by a way to fall upon the foe from behind, this castle had been long in the winning, and our work by that much hindered. Thou hast proved thy gentle blood by the knightly deed thou didst for the young maid, now our own ward, and sure are we that thou art the son of our loved comrade Count Otto von Wulfstanger. Kneel down."

Then, as Wulf knelt, fair dazed by the surging of his own blood in his ears, the emperor laid his drawn sword across the youth's bowed shoulders.

"Rise, Herr Wulf von Wulfstanger," he said.

The young knight, trembling like any timid maid, got to his feet again, though how he could not have told.

"He 'll need thy nursing a bit, Karl," Rudolf of Hapsburg said, an amused smile playing about his grim mouth; and our Wulf never knew that the old armorer more carried than led him away to quiet and rest.

Not all in a day was order restored at the Swartzburg; for many and woeful had been the deeds of the high-handed robber who had so long ruled within those grim walls. They came to light little by little under the searching of the emperor's wardens; and when the parchments relating to the Swartzburg properties came to be examined, it was found that not the baron, nor Conradt, his heir-at-law, had all along been owner of the castle, but young Elise von Hofenhoer, whose guardian the treacherous noble had been. There were other outlying lands, as well, from which the baron had long collected the revenues, and it was to keep his hold on what he had so wrongfully seized that he would have by force have married Elise to Conradt, his wicked nephew and ready tool.

The emperor himself now became guardian to the maiden, who, happy in the safe shelter of St. Ursula, was to remain there until such time as a husband might claim the right to fend for her and hers, if need should come.

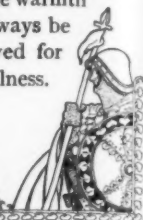
And now our Wulf of the forge and the for-

est abode in the hall of his father, Count Otto von Wulfstanger, and made bright that wronged one's days. Rudolf of Hapsburg had long been in charge of the estates of the lost nobleman, and a straight accounting made the honest soldier-emperor to Wulf, as his heir, of all that he had held in trust.

With old Karl for helper and adviser, Wulf, all doubt and mystery cleared, ruled in the hall of his fathers. Later

he brought to that stately home his fair bride from St. Ursula, given into his keeping by the emperor himself, and there, the story tells, Baron Wulf von Wulfstanger and his lady lived long a life of usefulness and good deeds, whereby those hard times were made easier for many, and the sunshine, gathered through the years, made warmth and light for others, as must always be in this world when any life is lived for the sake of usefulness and helpfulness.

THE END.



## UNCLE SAM'S TOYS.

BY WILL H. CHANDLEE.

It will doubtless surprise many ST. NICHOLAS readers to learn that Uncle Sam has one of the largest collections of toys in the world. He keeps them in the National Museum at Washington, where they may be seen by hundreds, nicely arranged and labeled, in the exhibition hall. But on the balcony in the west end of the big building is the real Santa Claus shop. Like the spider's parlor in the nursery song, the way to this wonderland is "up a winding stair."

On each side of the long balcony is a range of tall pine cases fitted with drawers in which are stored toys and games from all parts of the world. To be sure, these drawers contain many other interesting objects besides, for it is in this department that everything relating to ethnology is sorted and catalogued for exhibition. Ethnology is the science which tells us of human races in their progress from savagery to civilization—how people in all parts of the world live, of the things they use in every-day life, and how they use them.

The toys and games in Uncle Sam's collection have been gathered, by his agents, from every known country. Many of them are rare

and costly, and beautifully made; but the most interesting and unusual are the product of uncivilized hands. Some are gorgeously colored and decorated with beads and shells, while others are grimy and pitifully mean; but they have each brought their measure of joy to some childish heart, somewhere.

Of dolls alone there are enough to give any little girl reader a new one every day until she becomes too old to care longer for them: ivory babies from Alaska, dressed in little coats of deer fur to protect them from an Arctic winter; South Sea Island puppets with scarcely any clothes at all; Indian papooses decked with beads and buckskin; pink-cheeked waxen beauties from Paris; almond-eyed Japanese in red kimonos; black wooden images from the Kongo; and various other dolls fashioned from clothes-pins, pine cones, and corn-husks:

Some in rags,  
Some in jags,  
And some in velvet gowns.

Uncle Sam is especially rich in Alaskan dolls. Some of them are of ivory, no bigger than your thumb; but the clothing is made with the great-



est care from the softest sealskin, trimmed with beads and edged with white hair from the leg of the deer. Others are two or three feet in height, and are carved from wood, and equally well dressed, even to their mittens, skin caps with ear-flaps, and their perfectly correct snow-shoes. Then there are the dolls of the Zuñi and the Moqui Indians of Arizona and New Mexico. These are a brilliant and cheerful gathering, and occupy a drawer all to themselves. Some are made of wood and others of baked clay, and all are painted in gaudy colors. Some among them have real hair, done up in funny little knots above their ears, or in braids with feathers and red flannel. I show you a picture of one of them; he represents a fire-dancer. His body is painted black and is spangled all over with glistening tinsel, which makes him appear as if he were covered with sparks.

Many of the more beautiful toys were made by the Eskimos. During the long Arctic nights these wonderful little people carve, from the tusks of the walrus, figures of every conceivable shape and design. Often entire vil-

lages are made, the huts, bidarkes (or canoes), and dog-sledges being in perfect miniature.

The long sledge shown in the picture is from Labrador. It is a fine specimen of native workmanship. The dogs are cut out of fine-grained white wood, and are most natural in their attitudes. The toy-makers of Nuremberg or of Switzerland could not have done more skilful work. The art of these Arctic folk is the more wonderful when one



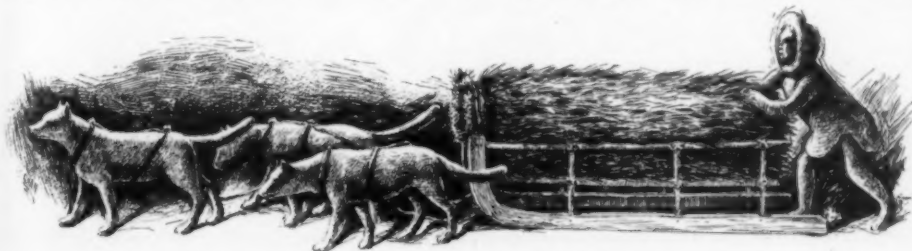
LABRADOR DOLL IN WINTER DRESS.

considers the very primitive tools which they have to use. The knife with which they carve the dainty little figures is seldom more than a bit of steel barrel-hoop, ground down to an edge, and lashed with thongs of walrus-hide to a handle of bone or drift-wood.

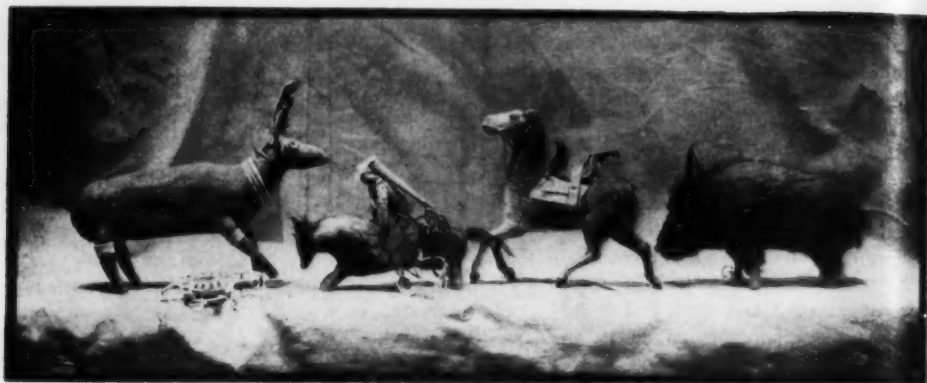
The toys of the Zuñi Indians are modeled in clay and baked to prevent them from crumbling. Cows, goats, and frogs, streaked and spotted with paint, hold the first place in this collection, but there are also clay whistles and bird-warblers, the latter quite like the tin ones seen in our shop-windows. The bird is made to sing by filling its hollow body with water and blowing through a tube inserted in its back.



MOQUI INDIAN FIRE-DANCER DOLL.



ESKIMO DOG-SLEDGE CARVED OUT OF WOOD BY ESKIMOS.



FROM UNCLE SAM'S "NOAH'S ARK."

There are also clay rattles of various shapes and sizes in the Zuñi exhibit, and wooden birds that flap their jointed wings like those we hang upon our Christmas tree.

In the collection of games there are a great many objects interesting either for the oddity of their shape, curious operation,

or beauty of workmanship. One novel game consists of four pieces of bone attached

by a bead string to a long steel bodkin. The bodkin is held in one hand and the bones tossed up into the air. A skilful player may succeed in catching one or more of the bones upon the steel point, and scores accordingly. This

game is a favorite with the Cheyenne Indians, and is not unlike our own game of "cup-and-ball."



ZUÑI RATTLE AND FLAPPING BIRD.

A card game from Persia, valued at many hundreds of dollars, has its board inlaid in



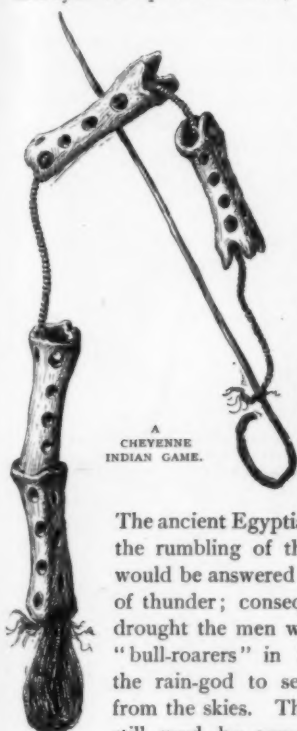
WAITING TO BE CATALOGUED.

solid gold; and a set of chessmen from India are of beautifully carved ivory, each "man" being at least four inches in height.

Another curious game, from which our "jack straws" is probably descended, consists of a bundle of arrows of carved ivory or wood. It was an ancient custom to toss these arrows into the air, and after they fell to the ground they were drawn out by the men grouped around them. In this manner, and according to the numbers and symbols upon the arrow, captains were ap-

pointed in the army and various duties were assigned the soldiers.

The so-called "bull-roarer," one of the oldest of toys, has an interesting history. It is nothing more than a bit of wood attached to a string, which, on being whirled around rapidly, produces a loud, rumbling sound.



A  
CHEYENNE  
INDIAN GAME.

The ancient Egyptians believed that the rumbling of the "bull-roarer" would be answered by the rumbling of thunder; consequently during a drought the men would sally forth, "bull-roarers" in hand, to invoke the rain-god to send them water from the skies. This curious toy is still used by some savage tribes, who believe its roaring noise will frighten away evil spirits that may be lurking near.

Tops and teetotums abound in the west balcony of the National Museum. They differ but little the world over. Uncle Sam has scores of them from Alaska, India, the Kongo, China, and some from the Zuñi Indians. They are of various shapes and colors, some long and slender, others short and thick, with "pegs" of ivory, stone, horn, bone, or metal. Those of the Zuñi are painted in gaudy stripes or



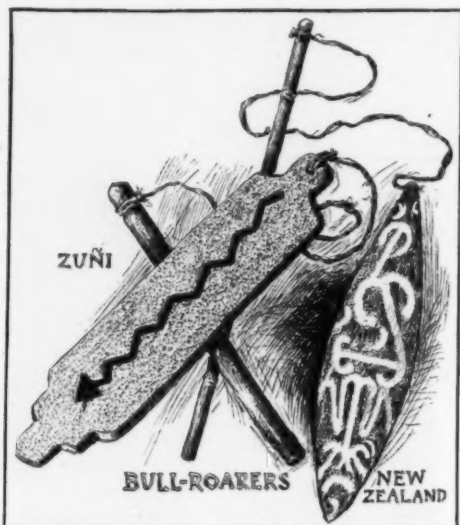
"TOYS BY THE DRAWERFUL."

rings of white, red, green, and black. The large top shown in the drawing is spun by



A BAMBOO FOOTBALL FROM SIAM.

pulling a thong or cord made of rawhide through a hole in the side of its socket. One



stone incased in buckskin. The large foot-ball in the picture is of Siamese manufacture; it is made of woven bamboo, is very springy, and is indestructible.

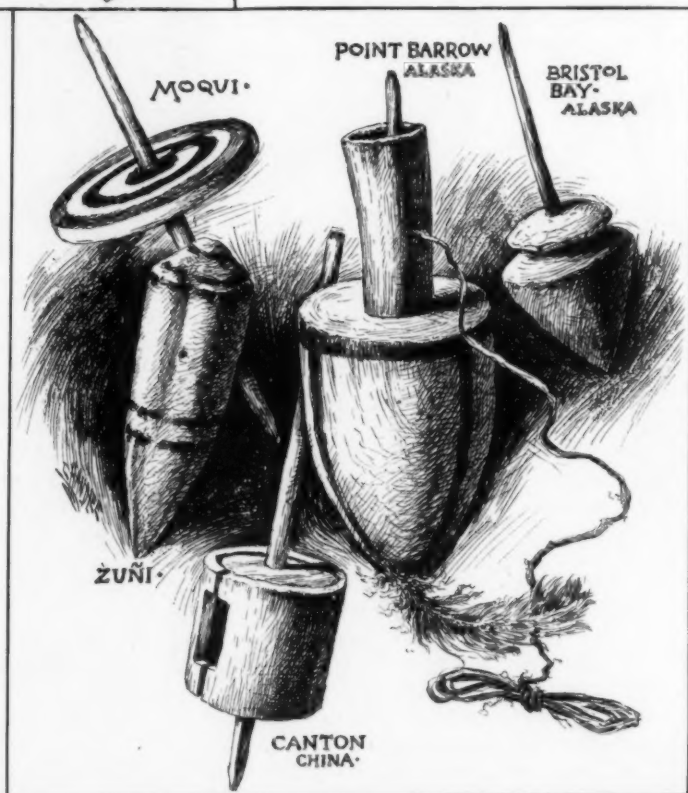
Dice, dominoes, parcheesi, and checkers have not been forgotten by Uncle Sam in his collection of games. He has a generous supply of them on hand. Some counters are mere bits of bone, roughly whittled wood, or painted shells, while others are of elaborately carved and polished ivory.

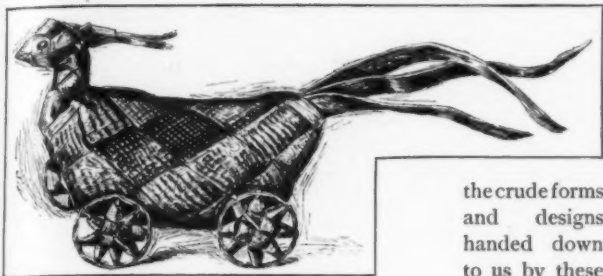
The mounted soldier, dressed in the costume of a warrior of the Spanish invasion, is from Mexico. His armor is made of bits of leather and is covered with strips of tin-foil to represent steel, as are also his feather-bedeked helmet and the point of the spear which he carries in his hand.

The thought that comes to one when view-

can find its elegantly finished descendants in any toy-window, it may be, with the word "Patented" marked upon them.

Another exhibit of especial interest to boys is a collection of balls—baseballs, handballs, and foot-balls. One among them is a nicely rounded bit of solid rubber. Others are built up of tightly wrapped deer-hide; these are used by the Indian boys. There are others still of wood; and one ball in particular, which it would not be advisable for any boy to attempt to "take off the bat," even with an extra heavy pair of catcher's gloves, is made of





A STRANGE BIRD ON WHEELS, FROM INDIA.

ing the toys and games of savage and semi-civilized races is the similarity that exists between them and those of our own race. "See how



FOR A SIOUX INDIAN BOY.

these poor people have tried to copy our playthings," one is tempted to say; but here we are mistaken, for our toys and games, as well as many of the articles we use every day, are nothing more than improvements upon

the crude forms and designs handed down to us by these savages, for as men become more civilized, so the work of the hand and the brain advances — ever going on toward the stage of perfection.

When next you are visiting Washington, do not fail to visit the National Museum, where the guardian of the



A DOLL OF PINE BARK.

treasure in the west balcony will show you more dolls and balls, tops, teetotums, and wonderthings than one could dream of in a year of Christmas Eves.



FROM OLD MEXICO.





## A ST. GEORGE OF TO-DAY.

BY BERTHA E. BUSH.

"I 'd like to be a hero," said Donald, my  
boy, to me,

"Like St. George who killed the dragon and  
set the princess free.

I 'd like to ride on a prancing steed and  
carry a long bright lance,

And kill a terrible monster. But a fellow  
has no chance!

The dragons all are dead now, and the  
dangers are so small—

A boy who lives in these times can't do  
brave deeds at all."

Ah, Donald, the tales of our own day are  
better than legends to me:

I know of a boy in this city as brave as  
St. George could be.

He does not ride on a prancing steed, he  
is not armor-clad;

He 's freckled, and rides a bicycle—an  
every-day kind of a lad.

But he dashed across this very street in  
the face of death, one day,

And saved the life of a little child—and  
quietly went his way.

'T was ten o'clock, when our street, you  
know, is dull—when, as a rule,

The fathers and mothers are busy, the chil-  
dren are at school.

The only passers-by I saw, as I stepped to  
the window there,

Were a nursemaid taking a baby out to  
breathe the pleasant air,

And one little happy toddler with eager,  
dancing feet,

Who had slipped away from her nurse's  
care and wandered into the street.

Glad with the joy of the morning, she stood  
on the crossing there,

With her shining eyes and tripping feet and  
flying flossy hair,

Half baby elf, half cherub, and wholly filled  
with glee,

In the bright September sunshine, careless  
and blithe and free,

Clapping her hands in pure delight at the  
sight that met her eye—

A sight that froze my heart with fear, yet  
I could not make a cry.

For just beyond her came the sound of a  
startling, clashing gong.

A fire-engine dashed down the street, the  
horses fierce and strong

Running, racing at furious pace that none  
could check or stay—

And the baby girl, unknowing, was stand-  
ing right in the way!

The driver strained at the bits full strength,  
but he saw the child too late;

He could not—could not—swerve his  
steeds to save her from her fate!

Would God not send his angel? To save  
her there was none.

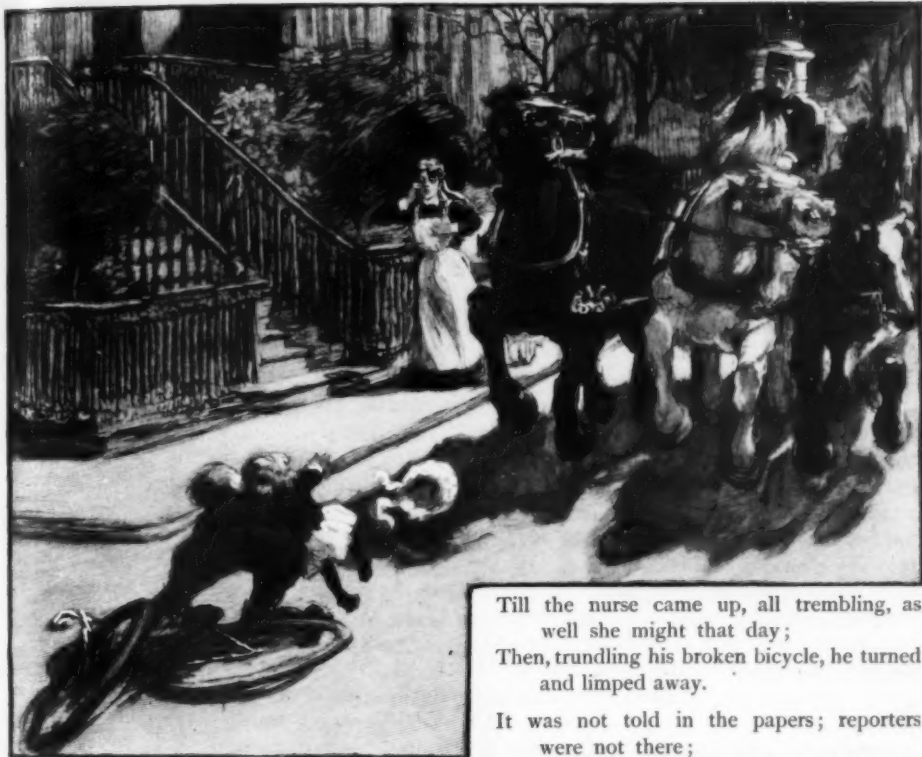
He did; he sent an angel, but a very  
human one.

A boy came scorching down the street with  
cap pulled over his eyes:

'T was a race between boy and horses; and  
straight to the goal he flies!

He snatched the child from just before the  
terrible trampling feet,

And fell—but, falling, whirled her to the  
corner of the street.



The engine clattered on its way, and now, the danger by,  
Like any frightened baby, the child began to cry.  
She had not feared the peril, but she feared  
her rescuer,  
And, in awkward boyish fashion, he tried to  
comfort her —



Till the nurse came up, all trembling, as  
well she might that day;  
Then, trundling his broken bicycle, he turned  
and limped away.

It was not told in the papers; reporters  
were not there;

And the frightened nursemaid's only thought  
was of her "dreadful scare."

So nobody knows his name, my boy, and the  
only rewards he got  
Were a badly broken bicycle and many an  
aching spot.

But I know St. George of Dragon fame could  
not be braver  
than he —

That freckled  
boy with the  
bicycle is hero  
enough for  
me.





## LITTLE MISS HOPEFUL.

BY MARY M. PARKS

THE Ways and Means Committee was in session on the shed roof. Properly mama should have been chairman of this committee; but a chairman who has been ill, and is very weak and totally discouraged, is likely to be a damper on proceedings. "Little Miss Hopeful" made an excellent chairman.

"I wrote Uncle Jim," she said.

"Much good that 'll do!" said Fred. "Did n't mama write him, and did n't the letter come hustling back from the Dead-letter Office?"

"I wrote to the old home place in New Hampshire."

"Well, you are a genius!" cried Joe, with a burst of laughter. "Why, Uncle Jim has n't been there in years."

"That 's why I wrote," retorted Little Miss Hopeful, whose really true name was Becca. "Don't you know how it is in stories? No matter how far they wander, they always come back at last to—to weep over the— the tombs of their ancestors; and usually at Christmas-time. And every year, as long as I live, I 'm going to write to Uncle Jim. Then," she continued, her eyes growing larger and darker, "some day he 'll come back and find his folks all gone, and he 'll wander about, feeling very sad; and he 'll pass the little old post-office; and the old post-master will see him and say, 'Are n't you Jim Lawrence? Here 's a letter for you.' Then he 'll open it and—"

"You little goose!" gasped Joe. "Don't you know that in real life things never happen as the authors say they do in story-books?"

"Why, Joe Wilson," said Becca, "they do, too! There was old Mrs. Graham's son, that had to wash for a living,—I mean *she* had to wash for a living,—and he went to the Klondike and came back rich; and now she has a lovely house, and everything."

"Pshaw! Why, Uncle Jim might not answer, anyway," said Joe. "He has n't seen mama for years, and he never saw us—"

"Joe, for shame on you!" snapped Becca, her eyes flashing. "You know he 'd come on the next train. Would n't you?"

"Yes, I would," said Joe, "but—" He did n't finish the sentence. He had long ago learned that it is useless to argue with a girl. What can a fellow do with a creature that flies at him like a whirlwind, taking his breath away, and does n't leave him a leg to stand on, when all the time he knows he is right? A dignified silence is the only resource.

"Anyway, we don't know that he 'll get it this Christmas," Fred remarked. "How much money is left now?"

"Five dollars and twenty-three cents and a postage-stamp," replied Becca. "I counted it yesterday."

"We ought not to have come way out here to Arkansas," said Fred.

"No," Becca agreed; "but mama did n't know. It 's a warm climate, and we have no rent to pay, and she thought we could raise things; and so we can if we live till spring. If we only had a little more money!" and as she concluded she bounced up and stamped on the shingles with wrathful impatience.

"Calm yourself or you'll go through this old roof, sis," said Fred. "I wonder how papa happened to get hold of this place?"

"In trade some way, mama said, and it was all the creditors left us. I suppose they thought a little farm away down in Arkansas was not worth taking. They had never seen it. I do think it is the loveliest spot on earth," said Becca, looking about with dreamy delight.

If only one could live on beauty! The wee, whitewashed shanty was not comfortable, but it was exceedingly picturesque as it clung like a swallow's nest to the steep, woody slope. Below, Kimball's Creek, crystal clear, swept singing around the hill. Beyond the creek was a level stretch of magnificent timber with a tangled undergrowth of vines and shrubs. It was lovely even in winter.

"If we can only manage till spring," said Joe.

Then the black fear that they had been resolutely keeping down lifted its ugly head. It was a fear too awful to speak of—too awful even to think of. Little Miss Hopeful pushed it bravely away.

"About Christmas," she said.

"No use to talk about that," groaned Joe. "Of course we can't have a dinner, or presents. I told mama we did n't expect anything, but she only cried the more; and of course we can't decorate the house: she could n't bear to see it."

"But I've a plan," continued Little Miss Hopeful, her eyes beginning to sparkle. "We'll go to the empty cabin across the creek, and decorate both rooms with cedar and mistletoe, and have a Christmas tree. I've a lot of colored paper and candles left from last Christmas. And we'll have an old English Christmas, like the one told about in the 'Sketch Book.' We'll act it all out."

"Yes, that'll be great!" Joe exclaimed. "There are loads of mistletoe up the creek."

"I thought I should get the money for a bicycle this year," said Fred, rather dismally; "but I'd rather have all the roast turkey I could eat than forty bicycles."

Becca's face twitched. She was hungry, too. She could bear that; but nothing wrings a woman's heart, even a very little woman's, like the thought of a hungry boy; and a boy

who prefers a meal of roast turkey to a bicycle has been pretty well starved.

"Come!" she cried hastily, springing to her feet. "Let's go look at the cabin."

As they ran down the road, they stopped short with exclamations of dismay. A thin blue streak was rising from the trees around the cabin. "Oh, dear!" said Becca. "Some one must have moved in!"

As they drew a little nearer they saw a covered wagon with two lean horses tied behind it by the cabin door; and on the bank of the creek sat three children, sunning themselves.

"Have you moved into the cabin?" Becca asked pleasantly.

The oldest child nodded. "Our folks thought we'd stop thar a spell," she said.

"I suppose you will be there until after Christmas," said Becca.

"I dunno," said the girl.

Becca saw that the children's feet were bare.

"Does your mother allow you to go barefoot in the winter?" she asked severely.

"Ha'n't got any shoes," replied the child.

Becca turned away in dire dismay, and slowly and silently the three walked back up the road. Each one knew the painful thought that was troubling the others. Was the day coming when they also must go barefoot for the lack of shoes?

Then Becca's active, generous little mind flew off on another track.

"I'd be willing to give her Emmeline, but I could n't give up Alice," she said.

"Pshaw! why, you need n't to," said quick-witted Joe. "She'd be happy as they make 'em, with Emmeline. And I'll give the biggest boy my musical top."

"I'll give my toy soldiers to the littlest kid," said Fred. "I'm getting too big to play with 'em, and it'll be a good way to break off."

"If we had any extra shoes we could give 'em some, but these are all I have," said Becca, pausing and regarding them gloomily.

"Nonsense!" said Joe, cheerily. "If you gave 'em their choice they'd take the toys."

"Yes, they would!" said Fred. "We can give 'em a Christmas they'll remember as long as they live. That little kid's eyes'll pop clear out of his head when he sees those soldiers!"

Little Miss Hopeful's face took fire again. "Oh, oh!" she cried, hopping up and down like a very active cricket. "We 'll go there Christmas, and decorate the east room, and have the Christmas tree, and give 'em the things. Oh, what fun!"

The next morning the children went to call on their new neighbors. A sad-faced but kindly woman met the children at the door.

"Howdy! Howdy! Come right in and set down," she said hospitably.

A tall, thin, pale-faced man sat humped over the fire, coughing now and then. Poor Becca winced as she looked at him, for she saw on his face the same look of illness and despair that darkened her own mother's.

"Was it you-'uns that was talkin' to my chillen down at the branch yesterday? Wall, sissy, I 'm 'shamed that we cain't do better by our chillen," said the woman, her thin face flushing. "But 'pears like we 've hed the wust luck. Craps a-failin' an' critters a-dyin', an' pa 's ben sick, an' so much of the time we 've ben on the road. Our chillen hain't hed no kind o' raisin', an' that 's a fact. 'Pears like we done fergot it all, we 've been so poor."

There was a slight pause in the conversation, and Becca seized the opportunity.

"We wanted to ask you if we might decorate the east room to-morrow and have a Christmas tree there, and we would like so much to have your children help us with it."

"Law bless you, honey, come right along an' make yourselves to home!" said the good soul. "My chillen 'll be proud to help you." Christmas morning Becca and the boys



THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN THE OLD CABIN.

were up before the sun, and had their scanty breakfast over in a twinkling.

The father of the family met them at the cabin door, and if they had seen him anywhere else they would not have known him, for the doleful look was lost in one wide grin. "Look-a here, sissy," he said, dragging something forward. It was a huge wild turkey!



"Oh, where did you get it?" gasped Becca, while the boys whistled an accompaniment.

"Shot 'im this mornin' afore sun-up; an' I would n't 'low mam ter tech a feather of 'im till you-'uns hed seen 'im," he said proudly.

"You-'uns goin' to have a tu'key dinner?" asked the mother, as they entered the room.

"No 'm," said Becca.

"Reckon you-all's folks would come ovah an' eat tu'key with us?" she inquired timidly.

"There 's only mama," said Becca; "but we never could get her to come. She 's been ill, and she 's very weak and nervous. We can't leave her long, but she likes to have us go sometimes, for noise worries her and she knows we can't keep still always."

"Pore soul! But ef I 'd hev early dinner, could n't you-'uns eat with us an' then take some home to your mother?"

"I think we could, thank you," said Becca, looking at the boys' glistening eyes.

"Pa, give me thet tu'key this minute. Might hev hed it a-cookin' an hour ago but fer your foolishness!" said the woman, jokingly.

In an incredibly short time the bird was browning beautifully, and the east room was a bower of green. Becca decorated the tree. Then she lighted the candles, closed the outer door, darkened the window, and called in the company. The room and tree, lighted by the candles and the firelight, were really beautiful. Becca and her brothers recited some Christmas poems and sang a song or two, and then the presents were distributed. The wonder and delight of the children over their little gifts was pathetic.

"Pore leetle child!" said the mother, looking at her small daughter with moist eyes. "She nevah had a doll afore, 'cept a rag one. I wish 't I had somepin fer you-'uns, sissy."

"Oh, we 've had lots of Christmases," said Little Miss Hopeful. "And think of the turkey!"

The turkey, indeed! What if there was not much else to eat? It was a king of turkeys; and the head of the family cracked jokes and told thrilling Indian tales until they could hardly eat for listening, hungry as they were.

"We 've had a perfectly lovely time, and we 've enjoyed it all so much; but we must

hurry back to mama," said Becca, as they rose from the table.

"That 's right, honey," said the woman. "An' here 's a nice bit of tu'key I saved out for her. I 'm 'fraid we 'll nevah see you-'uns any moah, honey. We 're all goin' back to ol' Kaintuck to-morrow," she continued, her face tremulous with delight. "After you-'uns was here yesterday, we thought of how gran'pa would be glad ter see us, an' that we wa'n't doin' right by the chillen. So we air goin' back to gran'pa's. He 's got a big stock-farm, an' he 's gittin' ol', an' he 'll be proud to have us come back an' look after things."

"Oh, I 'm so glad!" said Becca.

"An' we 'll nevah fergit this Christmas, sissy. We 'll give the chillen some schoolin', an' keep Christmas every year."

"It 's the strangest thing—" said Becca, proudly flourishing her turkey-tail fan, as they trudged homeward (for their new friends had bestowed upon them the turkey tail and wings), "I did n't think we would have a good time at all this Christmas, and it 's one of the jolliest we ever had. I do hope mama is all right. It seems like such a very long time since we left her."

She ran lightly up the shaky steps and threw open the door; then she stopped with a shock that she never forgot: for there sat a man who was nothing more nor less than an enlarged copy of her brother Joe. With a squeak of alarm, she turned and clutched her brother to make sure that he was really there in the flesh and unchanged. Then she had another start; for on the other side of the fire sat their mama, no longer wan and weeping, but sweet and smiling, pink-cheeked and shining-eyed.

"Children," she said, "this is your Uncle Jim."

Whereupon, for the first time in her life, little Miss Hopeful forgot her manners. She whirled squarely about with her back to her uncle, and faced her brothers with an exulting smile on her pert little face.

"Aha!" she chirped, "what did I tell you?"

The next minute she was crying comfortably in Uncle Jim's arms, while Fred and Joe were dancing a hornpipe that shook the little house.

## BOOKS AND READING.

### READING ABOUT HOLIDAYS.

WHEN holiday times are approaching, it is well to prepare for them by making yourself acquainted with the reasons for the keeping of the various days. About Christmas you need no information of that kind, but instead you will be interested in learning in how many ways the day is kept in various lands and by different races. The Germans, the French, the Italians, the Spaniards, the Greeks—each have customs peculiar to themselves and very well worth knowing about. Few children of to-day would like to give up Santa Claus and the Christmas tree, but we Americans and English borrowed both from Germany. Perhaps in the many books about holidays may be found other plants as well worth cultivating as the Christmas tree, or men who will make as welcome visitors as Santa Claus himself.

### CHRISTMAS MONEY.

FAR down in the toe of the stocking there may be found a little gold piece, and upon its smiling yellow face there is the promise of pleasures to come. But like the king with the golden touch, you will soon find that gold cannot be eaten, and is most valuable when changed into another form. Before making the magical transformation, do not forget that the book-store is one of the magician's caves where the gold piece may be made to take another form, and a form that is nearly indestructible. Like the fairy food, a book may be consumed again and again without being at all smaller. Like the Flying Horse, the book may be made to carry you anywhere on the globe. Once within its pages you travel safely anywhere, as if clothed in the Suit of Invisibility; and your speed will put to shame the Shoes of Swift. Better than the Inexhaustible Purse, a book not only retains all its own wealth, but continually adds to yours. There is no end to a book's magical power. It may be the means of blessing a friend or reconciling an enemy.

Now, what is the secret that makes a well written book so great a marvel? A book is a little box of thoughts, and in thought all things have their beginning and must find their end.

What fairy-story wand can be weighed in the balance against the pen of Thackeray or of Dickens? The pen—or rather the mind behind the pen—is the magic of our day.

### READING ESSAYS.

Do not young people read too many stories?

There is so much good writing in articles that it seems a pity not to begin upon them before the days of our youth are past. You need not commence with Emerson or Macaulay, for they are not the easiest to understand. Thoreau, Stevenson, Arthur Helps, Burroughs, Charles Lamb—all have written essays that young readers will enjoy. In order to find good reading of any kind, there is no better way than to ask questions of those who are wiser. Older readers take great pleasure in advising their juniors, and you will soon learn where to go when seeking the best advice.

### QUOTATIONS.

If you must quote, do quote correctly. Is the pen mightier than the sword? Thousands say or print, "The pen is mightier than the sword." It may be true, but if it is meant for a quotation it is not fairly given. The original lines in the play are:

Beneath the rule of men entirely great,  
The pen is mightier than the sword.

This error has been corrected over and over again. But those who misquote seldom read what they are pretending to quote, but quote from a man who quoted from another man who—and so on. In many books will be found long lists of these prevalent misquotations.

### NEWSPAPERS.

It seems that children and newspapers may very well thrive separately. There is, of course, a class of newspapers which are carefully written and well edited, and meant to be good reading for every age that reads at all. But even the best newspaper is not the best reading for children. If there is news in which children are rightfully interested, it would be an easy matter for some older person to read it aloud or to repeat to children what is important for them to know. Childhood is a time when the home life should

come first, since the same surroundings can never return; and the doings of the grown-up world should not greatly concern children in a happy home. Outside interests will force their way to the young mind soon enough, and the child who begins to read newspapers too early is much to be pitied. As to the newspapers or magazines that are not good company for any one, they are worst in children's hands.

**INTERRUPTIONS.** It is a wise rule to "do one thing at a time." And in nothing is the rule more important than in reading. The mind is very accommodating, and will try to do its work under the most discouraging circumstances. You can sit in a room full of people who are talking and laughing, and yet can read with some understanding. But where this is not necessary it should never be done. Read in quiet and in solitude if you hope for the best results. At least, keep the best books for the quiet hours, and this for two reasons. One is, that you may see all there is in the book; another is, that your mind may do its work with the least effort and the least fatigue. At the same time, it is well to teach yourself to forget what is going on about you, so that you may be able to work even when silence and solitude are not attainable. Like most good rules, this one about interruptions needs to be applied with wise judgment.

**BOOKS NOT BOOKS.** Is N'T it Charles Lamb who speaks of "books that are not books"?—such as account-books, cookery-books, almanacs, and such homely, useful creatures of the pen? Of course none will deny the value of these, but it is not with these that this department has mainly to do. Yet there are some volumes not to be called literature that should be familiar to book-lovers; and one of the most valuable of them is the pocket note-book.

Each of you who learns to keep such a handy little friend will learn to select the sort that suits your needs; but a good one is a rather thin book, with flexible cover, and the pages ruled in "quadrillé ruling"—that is, in faint squares. This ruling is useful whether you write or draw, and becomes more valuable as you learn its many uses. By means of the little

squares, the pages can be at once divided into columns or regular spaces of any kind. You may use a wide or narrow ruling, or, as the lines are faint, none at all. If you mean to carry a note-book, by all means try the quadrillé ruling. But the reasons for carrying the book must go into another paragraph.

**A NOTE-BOOK'S USES.** EVERY note-book user will have his own favorite items. At Christmas, for instance, there are the lists of presents bought or to be bought, or worth thinking about. At New Year's, there are the new leaves to be turned over, and the good resolutions to be jotted down. But for the reader, besides these items, the note-book should be ready to act as a memory. As you read you come upon a reference to—let us say, Christopher Columbus. Now the name seems familiar to you as a well-read student of history, but for a moment you do not recall just what he did. Was he the conqueror of Peru, or did he found Jamestown? If you will take out your note-book, and make a note like this: "Columbus, Christopher. Why was he celebrated?" you will impress your mind with the question, and will before long be able to record the answer. And do not forget to mark in some way the memoranda that are used up. Then, when you look for a new memorandum, you will not find the old ones in the way. It is a good plan, also, to look over the book now and then for the sake of removing "dead" pages.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!** THERE is no other Christmas gift that can bring the pleasure given by a happy human face. It is the gift that may be made by poor or rich, by old or young. It is the gift to which all are entitled, with which all are pleased. It is written in a language all can read, and carries a message none will refuse. Every kindly thought is at once printed upon the face in lines that cannot be misread, and published through eyes and lips to every reader. This is the Christmas carol all may write, and which all will read on Christmas morning to their health and happiness. Before the lips are opened for the morning greeting, the whole face should speak the yet unspoken words:

"I wish you a very merry Christmas!"



# A DILEMMA



by  
Carolyn Wells



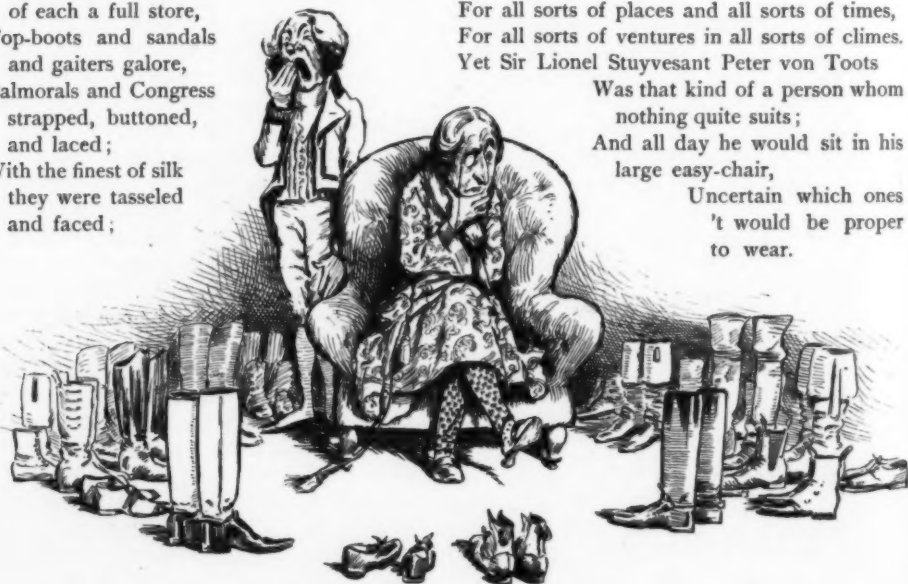
SIR LIONEL STUYVESANT PETER VON TOOTS  
Had one hundred and ten pairs of beautiful boots :  
Blüchers and Wellingtons, Hessians and Jacks,  
Round toes and pointed toes, russets and blacks,  
High-lows and buskins,  
of each a full store,  
Top-boots and sandals  
and gaiters galore,  
Balmorals and Congress  
strapped, buttoned,  
and laced ;  
With the finest of silk  
they were tasseled  
and faced ;

Bathing, golf, tennis, and bicycle shoes,  
Worsted-worked slippers of marvelous hues,  
Dancing-pumps, too, of bright patent leather—  
In short, he had foot-gear for all sorts of  
weather,

For all sorts of places and all sorts of times,  
For all sorts of ventures in all sorts of climes.  
Yet Sir Lionel Stuyvesant Peter von Toots

Was that kind of a person whom  
nothing quite suits ;  
And all day he would sit in his  
large easy-chair,

Uncertain which ones  
't would be proper  
to wear.





BY MARY CATHERINE HEWS.

A PAIR of mittens, warm and red,  
 New shoes that had shiny toes,  
 A velvet cap for his curly head,  
 And a tie of palest rose;  
 A bag of books, a twelve-inch rule,  
 And the daintiest hands in town—  
 These were the things that went to school  
 With William Herbert Brown.

A ragged mitten without a thumb,  
 Two shoes that were scorched at the  
 toes,  
 A head that whirled with a dizzy hum  
 Since the snowball hit his nose;  
 A stringless bag, and a broken rule,  
 And the dingiest hands in town—  
 These were the things that came from  
 school  
 With happy "Billy" Brown.







## THE STORY OF BARNABY LEE.

BY JOHN BENNETT.

(Author of "Master Skylark.")

[This story was begun in the November, 1900, number.]

### CHAPTER XXXII.

#### NEW PERIL.

THE weather was now grown intensely hot. The sun came up like a drop of blood and went down like a ball of red-hot copper; the wind died in the streets. The men from the Esopus

garrison, who had been ordered in to the fort, came in dripping wet with sweat and white with the dust of the blazing road. Two of them had been sunstruck and were wholly unfit for fighting; the rest were worn out with marching through the bitter heat. They threw themselves flat on the ground like dogs, and lay there, panting, unable to speak, their

swollen, parched tongues hanging out of their mouths. They brought a little powder with them, and that was of some use to the garrison.

The noise of their marching was scarcely still before there came a startling, sudden cry; the mill-brake was set with a fierce creak; the great arms swept on for half a turn, trembled, stopped; down from the loft came Jan de Witt, the miller, as white as his floury jacket.

"Your Excellency, there is no grain to grind!" he cried, when he came to the Director-General's presence. "The bins are empty. Unless we can get some grain to grind, we shall be starved like cats in a garret!"

What he said was true: there were not a hundred *schepels* of meal; there were not enough barley-grits, beans, and peas to victual the servants a fortnight; there was no meat—the days were too hot; no fish, for it was not the season. The company's stores had been stowed in ships to be sent to Curaçoa.

"Commissary, unload me those stores," said the Director-General.

"Your Excellency, the stores are gone," replied the commissary.

"Gone?" exclaimed Stuyvesant, suddenly pale. "I told thee to hold the sloops!"

"Ay, but, your Excellency, the Chamber of Deputies said —"

Stuyvesant looked around him as if seeking something to break. His mustache worked up and down; he set his teeth into his trembling lip; at the corner of his mouth a bubbling trickle of foam ran down. "God forgive the Chamber of Deputies!" he said. "They have taken from us the only food I had held for the garrison!" Then he sprang erect, for there was no time to waste in vain recriminations, nor had he strength to expend in useless wrath. "Sergeant Harmen Martensen!" he cried; and when the gaunt, shrewd Fleming came, "Sergeant," he said, "take Dirck Smidt's boat and run the coast as far to the eastward as ye dare go. Get food, food of any sort, and smuggle it into the city. Pay twice, pay thrice, but bring us food, whatever be the cost. Return as soon as in God's grace ye be permitted."

Martensen took the flyboat, with him Nicolas Bayard, and skirted the coast of Long Island Sound as far as the mouth of the Fresh Water

River, offering twice and thrice their worth for beef, pork, peas, and wheat, and any price for bread-stuffs, but secured scarce one measure of maize with a flitch or two of pork, and escaped by the very skin of his teeth from a twenty-four-gun English frigate, to which he gave the slip in the darkness. "Nobody will sell us provisions, your Excellency," he said when he reached the Director-General's room, "but all of them gave us curses!"

Then Stuyvesant went to the farmers, and begged them to thresh out the grain in their fields; but the farmers would neither thresh the wheat nor lend him any assistance.

"You idiots and simpletons!" he said. "Will ye not even clothe your own scarecrow?"

"The rats in the fort eat more than the crows," replied the farmers, sullenly. They hated the arbitrary hand which had laid down the law to them.

Then Stuyvesant bought the grain of them, and paid for it out of his private pocket; his serving-men and negro slaves threshed it wherever a threshing-floor could be found; and as fast as the serving-men beat out the grain, the negroes carried it down to the mill in baskets and barrows, buckets and bags, upon their shoulders and heads. Most of them wore but a breech-clout, the weather being sickeningly hot, and the sweat ran like water over their necks and down their bare black bodies.

The threshers, too, worked stripped to the waist, shining with perspiration; the flails were flying all day long, and drummed on into the twilight until it was too dark to see, and the workmen could hardly lift their arms. Three of them were taken ill from the heat and the over-exertion, and one who had drunken deeply of schnapps to strengthen his failing arm was never the same man afterward. "Ach, Gott!" said one, "I have threshed wheat before; but to-day I have threshed ashes. My flail smoked; the flying wheat was like sparks among the straw!"

When they were done they lay down by the pond and put their heads into the water, although it was trodden muddy and was almost as warm as blood. They were all of them shaking from head to foot, and were fairly gray with weariness; one of them cried, and others choked, as if they had been tired children; the

strength of their hearts had gone out of them as weakness of body came in.

Day and night, so long as there was a breath to turn the windmill sails, the millstones were kept going until their rumble seemed like the undertone of the trouble upon the town. The air was full of the drifting meal, which floated everywhere. The miller's men coughed with the flour-dust, and their linen shirts grew pasty with sweat and the flour which lay upon them. They wrought as if they had forgotten the world in the sudden stress of toil.

The first night of the grinding a hurricane arose, howling about the open doors and roaring through the building. The miller's candles, thrust in the wall, sent shadows lurching over beams, bins, and grain-sacks; the revolution of the millstones made the whole tower tremble.

"Ye dare not grind in such a wind," declared the miller from the sand-hill.

"Dare I not?" replied Jan de Witt. "Watch thou, and see if I dare not!" and so saying, he cast loose the brake.

The mill-cap swung around with a stubborn creak; the sails gave one slow, beaten tug, then turned with a hum before the gale. Fast and faster they went, until it seemed they must be torn asunder by their very speed and whirled in fragments over the town. The oiler and his oil-pot hurried here and there; the mill was shaking like a tree; the thunder roared overhead, and the millstones thundered down below; the hot meal poured into the empty bin in a swift, uninterrupted stream.

A man stood on the staging, knife in hand, ready to cut away the sheets if there were chance to do so when all possible furling was past; sacks of grain, like headless bodies of legless men, came whirling up from below, with a constant whistling of tackle-blocks. The creaking of mill-gear, the slat of the sails, the rumble of the turning stones, were all the sounds that could be heard above the rush of the river below and the roar of the wind overhead.

In his coat of painted canvas the miller was everywhere, now directing the work within, now struggling on the staging, at imminent risk of being hurled bodily over the railing; twice he reeved the roaring sails in the teeth of the blinding gale, lest that worst of all mill calamities,

the wrecking of the sails, should send the cap of the mill and its running-gear in fragments to the ground. The wind blew out the candles; he wrought on in the darkness, finding the hopper as a man would find his mouth in a place of unbroken gloom, by long familiarity; there was no time to seek a light, nor use to call for one amid the roar of the storm. The man in the mill-loft groped here and there at his duty in the darkness, pushing the sacks to the miller's feet, aiding him, and never seeing his face, nor scarcely hearing his shout. They only wrought; and their dogged pluck was kin to heroism.

Then the wind began to fail. "It is going," said the miller. "Ach, the sun goes down to rise again, but the wind arises only to go down. God lend it to us a little longer!" But the wind was falling fast. By dawn there was not sufficient breeze to turn the windmill sails. There was not enough wind on the gallery to cool the miller's beaded forehead, nor enough on the fort-wall to stir the grass along the outer slope. Jan de Witt prayed with silent lips, but the sails of the mill stood motionless. Toward evening a few gray flecks stole up from the western horizon, with a host of clouds behind them, and there was lightning beyond the rim of the earth, and thunder in the distant hills; but no wind came of it. The raccoon hides and muskrat skins hanging upon the mill-side stank in the slumbrous heat; the sails above hung as limp and listless as the shirt-sleeves of a dreamer.

"Our grinding is done," said the miller. "God hath other use for the wind, no doubt; but we've not enough meal in New Amsterdam to keep us in bread for a single week!"

Then Stuyvesant seized the bake-shops, to supply the garrison, but got only six or seven measures of meal, some loaves of bread, a pan of rusks, and a schepel or so of biscuit, which made scarce a mouthful for his men. Then the brewers were forbidden to malt any grain which might be made into meal, and all fruit matured enough for use was gathered and laid in store; the kine of the city were numbered in lot, to be drawn for in case of need; the provender even of the animals, the ground-nuts and unmaturing fruits of the wood, were gathered

against starvation. Yet even with all there was not food enough to provision the city against a siege.

"Oh, Barnaby, what is to become of us?" asked Dorothy, with a quivering voice, as she came with his supper on a tray. "There is scarcely any bread to be had; the bakers are empty-handed; Andreas brings but the hominy cake, and the flour is almost gone. What is to become of us?"

"I do not know," said he. "Indeed, I think that nobody knows. Why do they not surrender?"

"Would they butcher us all if we did?"

"Do ye take them for savages?"

"I do not know; thou art right savage at times; and then—" here she put out her hand, and taking his, held it, trembling—"if John King's men should ever catch thee, my poor Barnaby, what would they do with thee?"

"I believe they would kill me," he answered; and then they were very still, and listened to the crying in the English camps along the distant shore, and to the hurry of feet about the fort, making ready for the fray.

That night, at sundown, through the coppery waters of the bay there came, in a small boat, to the English admiral's flagship the captain of a freebooter to offer his services. "Place me in the vanguard of your attack," he said, lowering, with a baleful scowl, "for, blight me green! I've a grudge against that Dutch burgh, and I would pay it off."

"I am not here paying grudges," said the commander of the English; "I am here to take New Amsterdam for my master, the Duke of York. You will take your place in column as we are pleased to line you, and attack as I give the order. Corporal, show the gentleman up!"

And the corporal showed the gentleman up.

(To be continued.)



"PLACE ME IN THE VANGUARD OF YOUR ATTACK," SAID THE FREEBOOTER, WITH A BALEFUL SCOWL.



Ask the school-boys, especially such as live in country places, whether summer or winter brings the greatest pleasure. Two to one they will vote for winter. . . . But the frolics out of doors! It makes the blood tingle even now to think of them.—BRADFORD TORREY.

#### THE SPRING FLOWERS ARE HERE.

"SPRING flowers here!" you exclaim. "But this is December, the beginning of winter, when we've just lost the flowers."



THE BUD OF THE SKUNK-CABBAGE BEGINS TO PUSH UP THROUGH ITS OWN DEAD LEAVES AND OTHERS LATE IN AUTUMN.

Yes, that is true, but not the whole truth. It tells us of this year's flowers, but what about those for next year? The profusion of flowers has indeed dwindled away, ending, as commonly accepted, in late No-

vember's flower, the mysterious witch-hazel that we pictured on page 173 of *Nature and Science* for December, 1900. That flower we may regard as the last of the floral act for each year. There is a moment's pause only in appearance, really no pause, for already the curtain has started to rise, disclosing just a peep of next year's flowers.

The young buds of the skunk-cabbage push their way up before winter sets in.

Thoreau writes of it in October: "Mortal and human creatures must take a little respite in this fall of the year. Their spirits do flag a little. But not so with the skunk-cabbage. Its withered leaves fall and are transfixed by a rising bud. Winter and death are ignored. The circle of life is complete."

"But," perhaps you next argue, "while this may be plant life starting in the fall, it is not really and truly a 'flower' as we commonly use that word."

Admitted. Let's consider another,—one of the sweetest, most fragile and beautiful flowers



THE FRAGILE HEPATICA.

"The first wild flower of spring" sometimes commences to bloom in December under the snow.



of spring,—the hepatica, or liverwort. Britton and Brown's "Illustrated Flora" gives its time of flowering, "December—May."

Mrs. Dana tells us that "these fragile-looking, enamel-like flowers are sometimes found actually beneath the snow."

William Hamilton Gibson writes: "If the open winter lures any wood blossom to open its eye, it will surely be the liverwort, even as this flower occasionally anticipates the spring in ordinary winter weather. I have before me a letter from an authority who picked them under a foot of snow on December 9, and this, too, in a winter not notably mild."

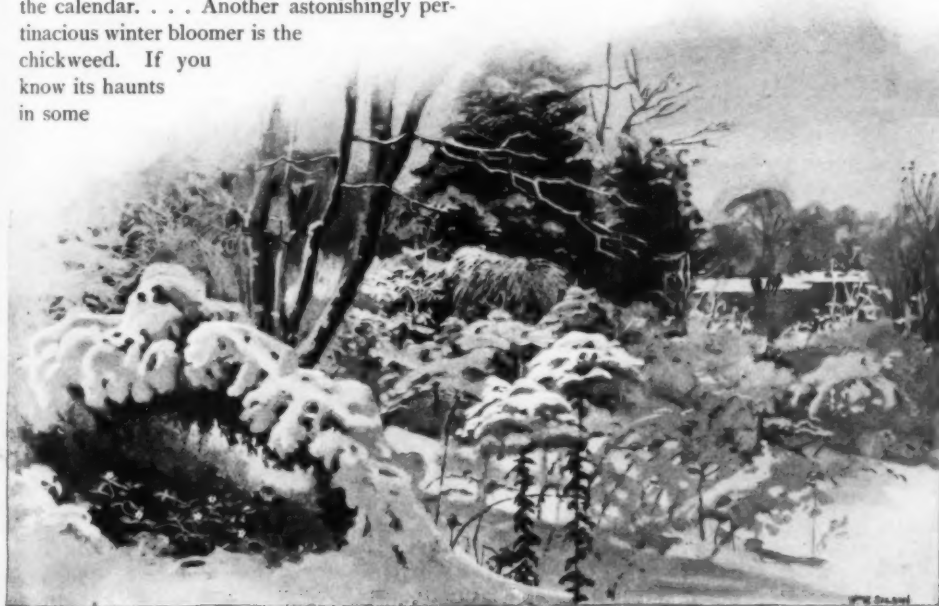
The same writer tells us of two other winter flowers: "The dandelion occasionally continues in bloom through the entire winter. During the year 1871 I picked a dandelion every month in the calendar. . . . Another astonishingly pertinacious winter bloomer is the chickweed. If you know its haunts in some



THE DANDELION SOMETIMES BLOOMS IN SHELTERED PLACES IN MIDWINTER.

sunny nook, you may dig away the snow and pick its white starry blossoms, larger and fuller now than those of summer."

John Burroughs, in writing of "Spring at the Capital" (Washington), says: "Though the mercury occasionally sinks to zero, yet the earth is never so blighted by the cold but that, in some shel-



THE STARRY BLOSSOMS OF THE CHICKWEED, OR STITCHWORT, UNDER THE SNOW OFTEN SEEM LARGER AND FULLER THAN THOSE OF SUMMER.

tered nook or corner, signs of vegetable life still remain, which on a little encouragement even asserts itself. I have found wild flowers here every month in the year: violets in December, a single houstonia in January (the little lump of earth on which it stood was frozen hard), and a tiny weed-like plant, with a flower almost microscopic in its smallness, growing along graveled walks and in old plowed fields in February. . . . I have found the bloodroot when it was still freezing two or three nights in the week, and have known at least three varieties of early flowers to be buried in eight inches of snow."

Bradford Torrey, in "A Rambler's Lease," says: "Winter in New England is not a time for gathering flowers out of doors, though, taking the years together, there is not a month of the twelve wherein one may not pick a few blossoms, even in Massachusetts."

Thus we see that there is ample authority from older observers that some plants fruiting in 1902 will commence to put forth their bloom in the winter months, so that even in this December the spring flowers are really here.

When we thus take into consideration this fact of the spring flowers commencing to bloom in winter, Longfellow's poem "The Flowers," from which the following is quoted, has an especially deep and true significance:

In all places, then, and in all seasons,  
Flowers expand their light and soul-  
like wings,  
Teaching us, by most persuasive rea-  
sons,  
How akin they are to human things.

Will our young folks, who love to roam the woods and fields, please keep on the lookout for spring flowers — yes, even in beds of snow — when you may be on a skating or coasting outing? Please "write to St. NICHOLAS about it," sending the specimens.

Keep on the lookout also for many plants that retain their fresh green appearance but do not bloom. In the brooks, springs, and marshes you will find algæ and higher forms of water-plants, sometimes nearly as luxuriant as in midsummer.

#### A QUICK-TEMPERED KINGLET.

BRAVERY and bigness do not always go together. Those who are familiar with our doorway birds know how effectually the house-wren persecutes the prowling cat and drives it away from the neighborhood of the bird's nest. King-birds drive off the crow and even greatly annoy the fish-hawk, and humming-birds are absolutely fearless at times, and successfully defend their nests if their antagonist is but a single bird of another species.

These instances refer to birds in spring and summer, when the nest and eggs or the young are the immediate object of a bird's solicitude. In winter we do not expect to witness such instances of courage on the part of the smaller of our birds. In fact, sparrows flee when a sparrow-hawk appears. But recently I saw a



THE CHEERY AND LIVELY GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET.

In his ordinary good nature calling out his shrill *see, see, see* from among the evergreens.

golden-crowned kinglet question the right of an Acadian owl to take his ease in an evergreen. Never was there a more inoffensive bird than this little owl at the time. It was cuddled up in a heap and half asleep. But the kinglet found the bird, and immediately set up a shout, and darted into the tree, snapped its beak, and, I think, twitched the owl's feathers. At any rate, there was no more sleep for the bird in the tree. But it was not moved to vacate at the mere bluster of a little kinglet. It sat still,

slowly opened its beak now and then, and moved its head to and fro. This was kept up until the sharp chirping of the kinglet attracted other birds, and a more serious attack was made. The owl then took flight, and while the rejoicing was general, not one of the sparrows, nuthatches, and chickadees made more clatter, for a brief moment, than the kinglet.

There was a sequel to the incident. The little bird that started the affair did too much. It was overcome by excess of exertion, and was so limp and listless when I saw it last, it seemed to me it was thinking whether it had not made a goose of itself. It is possible that some little



BUT THE KINGLET APPARENTLY FORGOT HIS GOOD NATURE AND MADE AN ABSURD ATTACK. YOU READILY SEE HOW ASTONISHED IS THE ACADIAN OWL AT THE AUDACITY OF THE LITTLE FELLOW.

birds, like some small children, never take time to consider if the gain derived is worth the effort it calls for. CHARLES C. ABBOTT, M.D.

## "WE WILL WRITE TO ST. NICHOLAS ABOUT IT."

### SINGING MICE.

In response to the request (page 561, *Nature and Science* for April), many letters have been received stating interesting experiences with singing mice. These letters not only tell of hearing the music, but of the proof that it was produced by the mice.

HADDENVILLE, FAYETTE CO., PA.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I am glad you want to hear of a singing mouse, as I had been for a long time going to write to you about one we knew several years ago when we lived in a double house in a small town. For several weeks we heard a strange musical noise in the wall. One day when my sister and I were taking an afternoon nap and mama was putting the baby to sleep and the house was very still, a mouse came, and sitting upright, proceeded to eat cookie crumbs, pausing to sing between bites. After that it grew quite tame, and we heard and saw it often every day. We fed it, and it seemed to grow happier and happier. It sang a low, sweet song, something like a canary-bird a short way

off. It seemed to sing the same tune over and over. When we sat in the room we could plainly hear it in the closet on the opposite side of the kitchen. Sometimes before taking a crumb it would stop, sit up, and holding its front feet together as if holding something, though they were empty, it would sing as if giving thanks for its dinner. It always sat and held its paws together while singing, but often it has food in them. Several people visited us on purpose to hear it. It often kept us from sleeping with its music. It seemed too happy to keep still. After about a month the lady on the other side of the house put out some poison, and we suppose our mouse got some, as we never saw or heard it afterward. We have since been sorry we did not catch it, as we might easily have done.

Your friend,  
KEYS COLLEY  
(age 12).

ENGLEWOOD, N. J.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: In your April, 1901, number there was a request for a description of a singing mouse. Quite a family of them lived in our house. Just at dusk they would begin to sing, first a faint, musical warbling, like a young canary, then changing into loud

trilling, and dying down into a soft twittering. It was some time before we knew what it was, as we were not then acquainted with singing mice. We were so sure that birds must have crept in under the flooring that we had a carpenter remove several boards, and we put a bird-cage close to the opening. For a long time it was a great mystery to us. At first there must have been only one pair of mice; but soon a little family came into existence, and they sang so loudly that they kept us awake. One of the little fellows was finally caught. He sang very faintly for several nights (we watched him, so we knew he sang); then he stopped from loneliness, and would sing no more; so we opened the cage door and he ran off to join his mates. I enjoy the Nature and Science department very much.

Your constant reader,

SHIRLEY WILLIS

(age 12).

#### A GOOD SUGGESTION—KEEPING RECORDS.

BUNKER HILL, ME.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I am a new subscriber, but I enjoy you very much. We have a summer place in Maine where there are lots of rocks, and there is a lake at the foot of the hill where our house is. In the lake there are some islands, and on one of these we have a camp.

I have made a list of the birds and flowers I saw so far this past summer, and am sending them to you. I hope this will be published.

Your faithful reader,

MARGERY BEDINGER.

P. S. I am nine years old.

#### THE AUSTRALIAN KINGFISHER.

MARYBOROUGH, QUEENSLAND.

My DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I am writing this time about the laughing-jackass. He is like a kingfisher, only larger and not so pretty. He has a brown back and a white breast. He is a very quiet bird, and comes about the garden, and will not fly away unless you go quite close to him. He is very useful in killing snakes. Nobody ever shoots him unless it is what we call a "new

chum," who does not know what a useful bird he is. He laughs just like a man. At day-break, if you are awake, you may hear him and his fellows laughing loudly. They often laugh at sunset and at other times during the day. Sometimes I see three or four of them



"LAUGHING-JACKASS."

sitting on a fig-tree or a gum-tree laughing as if they were enjoying a great joke.

Your loving reader,

HARRY E. ALDRIDGE (age 7).

Our young friend has very correctly described the appearance and habits of this large Australian kingfisher, commonly known as the "laughing-jackass."

#### THE DROLL AND GENTLE KANGAROO-RAT.

VINTONDALE, CAMBRIA CO., PA.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: Our old cat brings a great deal of the game she catches to the house, and not long ago she brought us a kangaroo-rat. None of us had ever seen one, and as books say that they are rarely seen, as they feed at night, we were very glad "Ben-nie" had brought it to us. The rat's body was about four inches long, but its tail was fully seven. It was a soft brown above, shaded light and dark, and a downy white underneath. Its hind legs were long and strong, and its front ones little, just like a real kangaroo's. It had great ears, long whiskers, and sharp gnawing-teeth. The tail was slender and hairy, with a brush of fur on the end. Altogether it was the prettiest little creature, and I was so glad to have seen it. The next day the cat caught another rat, but since then has not brought any home.



KANGAROO-RAT.

Your sincere friend,

ISADORE DOUGLAS (age 13).

It's difficult to have a kindly regard for that cat. It seems as if even she ought to know what a droll, saucy, elf-like, gentle little animal is a kangaroo-rat! If she kills any more, please instruct her, by any method found to be the most effective, that the kangaroo-rat is not to be classed with the common rats, but in interesting and harmless ways is fully the equal—perhaps even the superior—of the white rat.

#### PARTLY INAPPROPRIATE COLOR NAMES OF BIRDS.

PLAINFIELD, N. J.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: You ask for lists of our birds, besides the scarlet tanager, where the name describes the plumage of the male and not the female. I will name some I have seen.

The male rose-breasted grosbeak has the head and upper parts black, with white spots on the wings; the under parts are white and the breast is crimson. The female looks like an overgrown sparrow, and has the breast streaked with brown. Where the wing-linings

are rose in the male they are sulphur-yellow in the female. The ruby-crowned kinglets are olive-green above and grayish white below, with some olive on the sides. The male has a concealed ruby-colored patch in the center of the crown, which is usually difficult to see. This is lacking in the female. The purple finch has a raspberry-red body (not purple), with brown wings and tail. The female is olive-brown above and whitish below.

The American red crossbill is a curious-looking bird. The lower mandible turns up at the end, and the upper one turns down in the same manner. The body is mostly deep red. While the females have a crossed bill, their plumage is not red, but greenish olive, with brownish tints. [See letter and illustrations, page 744, ST. NICHOLAS for June, 1900.—ED.]

The handsome red-winged blackbird, with his yellow-edged scarlet epaulets, is a frequenter of bush-covered swamps. The rest of his plumage, besides his shoulders, is glossy black. The female is dark brown, spotted with black and buff. [See illustration, page 753, ST. NICHOLAS for June, 1901.—ED.]

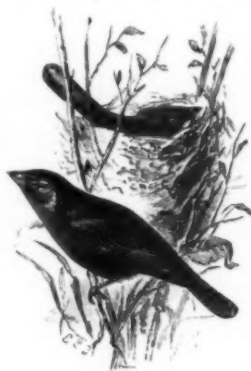
Very respectfully,

WILLIAM GRAY HARMAN (age 13).

The golden-crowned kinglet (see anecdote on page 172 of this number) differs from the female in the golden spot similar to the ruby spot referred to in the above letter.

WINDSOR, CONN.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: You asked the young folks to tell of birds having a common name inappropriate to the female.



INDIGO-BIRD.

the male. The tail quills are tipped with white.

Your interested reader,

HELEN CARY (age 16).

NEWTON, MASS.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I am a great lover of nature, and always read every word in the Nature and Science department. The other day, as I was out in the woods, I saw an olive-green bird, and near by there was a bright yellow bird with black wings and tail. When I



GOLDFINCH.

went home I looked in a book and saw that the olive-green bird was the female American goldfinch, and that the yellow bird was the male American goldfinch. They did not look at all alike.

Your loving reader,  
MIRIAM L. WARE  
(age 11).

The goldfinch is an excellent example of plumage of male differing from female, and also of changing from winter to summer, similar to the

male bobolink. In winter the male is drab on the back and brownish white underneath.

Other common names are "wild canary," from its beautiful song, and "thistle bird," from its love of the fluffy seeds of the thistle. While the color of the male is largely yellow, the term yellowbird is best used exclusively for a very different bird—the yellow warbler, or summer yellowbird. In this the male is entirely yellow, except reddish-brown streaks on breast and slight olive-brown on wings and tail. The female of this bird is almost the same color, except that the reddish-brown streakings are less distinct. The goldfinch is refined and musical. We can't help loving him. He seems to reciprocate by changing his coat and braving our winter storms.

#### BEETLES WITH MANDIBLES LIKE STAG-HORNS.

SUMTER, S. C.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I send you to-day two bugs, or beetles, which I found in a log. Please tell me what they are.

Your loving reader,  
CHARLES E. RICHARDSON.

The insects you send are stag-beetles, so called from the sharp prongs on the mandibles of the males of some species, that resemble the sharp branches on the antlers of a stag. Members of



STAG-BEETLE. EXCELLENTLY SHOWING THE BRANCHING ANTLEIFORM OF MANDIBLES.



this family of beetles are sometimes spoken of as "roebucks," "horn-bugs," etc.

The adults are found on the trunks of trees. They eat the sap, for procuring which their jaws are especially adapted. It is probable that some species feed on decaying wood. They lay their eggs in crevices in the bark near the roots.



"HORN-BUG." SHOWING THE STRONG JAWS, SOMEWHAT ANTLEIFORM, FOR BITING DECAYING WOOD.

#### THE "HORSE-HAIR SNAKE" MYTH.

HICKORY, HARFORD CO., MD.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: At school, the girls found some "snakes" out along the side of the road. They said they were "horse-hair snakes." I would like to know if they are little snakes, and how large they grow. They have a little mouth, but I could not see any eyes. The snake looked like grayish brown. They think if you put a horse-hair in the water and set it in the sun and leave it there nine days, it will turn into a snake. Do you think it is true? It has to be the right temperature.

Truly yours,

LESTER TUCKER  
(age 11).

The so-called "horse-hair snake" does not come from a horse-hair, and has nothing to do with a horse or its hairs, except that it is hair-like in form.

It is an internal parasite of crickets and grasshoppers. It escapes from the insect and goes to the water to lay its eggs. The young, in turn, seek a grasshopper or cricket, where the greater part of its life is spent.

See the chapter "Those Horse-hair Snakes," in "Eye Spy," by William Hamilton Gibson.

You now know more than those who told you to put horse-hairs in water and keep them at the "right temperature." You may keep the hairs and water at any temperature, but you will never make a horse-hair change into a snake.

Strange, is n't it, that many people, old and young, believe this myth, when a little experimenting will prove the falsity of it! In many rural communities this absurd belief in tiny horse-hair snakes is generally maintained.

#### THE HERMIT-CRABS.

GLOUCESTER, MASS.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I wonder if all the boys and girls have seen a hermit-crab? It gets into a shell and puts out its head and front claws. If you wave your hand in front of it, it will go back into its shell with a snap. Sometimes when we try to pick them up they will dig with their front claws, and are under the sand in a minute.

Yours truly,

G. LUCILLE SMITH (age 11).

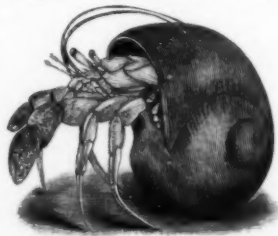
The rear part of the hermit-crab is not hard like that of a shrimp or crawfish, nor short and doubled underneath like that of the common crab, but is soft and fleshy, and in itself is not well protected from enemies. Therefore the hermit-crab usually takes possession of some cast-off shell, like that of a whelk or snail, by backing into it and inserting the tender part of its body in the spiral part and filling the aperture with its claws and other hard parts. Some-



A COMMON CRAB.

times the hermit-crab occupies a plant-stem or other similar tube. In moving about, the hermit-crab carries this borrowed house, and its appearance is somewhat similar to that of a snail. When the hermit-crab outgrows one shell he quits it and takes possession of another. The troubles of this house-hunting are very amusing to an observer. He often tries many shells before he finds one that will fit. Sometimes he covets a shell occupied by another hermit-crab, and then a struggle ensues. We may be certain, however, that the crabs, in such a contest, do not see the funny side of the matter, as we do.

Securely fas-



HERMIT-CRAB IN SHELL OF SEA-SNAIL.

tened to the surface of the shell, near the opening, there is often a sea-anemone, with its



HERMIT-CRAB IN A WHELIK-SHELL WITH  
SEA-ANEMONE ON IT.

mouth and tentacles near the head of the crab. By this strange partnership (which the naturalists call "commensalism") the sea-anemone is carried to new feeding-places, and the crab is protected from its enemies by the defensive tentacles of the anemone. It is evident that the crab is aware of this benefit, for observers have experimented by removing the sea-anemone. The crab will then go in search of another. When he finds one attached to a rock he will tear it off and place it on his own shell, to which the sea-anemone soon attaches itself.

Among the names applied to the hermit-crab by fishermen are "jack-in-the-box," "thief," and "stone lobster." The first name seems especially applicable and expressive of the manner in which the queer little animal occupies the shell.

#### A SCREECH-OWL IN A QUEER PLACE.

WAUKESHA, WIS.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: Last night my brother Walter heard a noise in the grate. He said, "What 's that in the grate?" He and Aunt Mary looked into the grate and saw an owl sitting in there. Then Walter and my brother Otto went into the cellar and made a cage big enough for ten owls. When the cage was done Aunt Mary opened the grate door and caught the owl and put it in the cage. Walter took the cage down into the cellar and gave the owl a little meat. The next morning Aunt Mary and our servant Freda looked into the cage, and the owl was gone, and they looked around and saw it sitting on a water-pipe. Then papa, Walter, Otto, and I looked through a bird-book to see what kind of an owl it was, and we think it is a screech-owl. Then Walter took it out to the barn, where it is now.

Your faithful reader,

GILBERT LACHER  
(age 8).

It is pleasing to note that our young friend and the other members of the family treated

this midnight visitor merely as an owl, although found in such a strange position, and in the night, too. They caged it and studied it as they would if it had been caught in the forest.

How strange it is that so very many absurd superstitions have been associated with this harmless bird, even under ordinary circumstances! But to find it at night in the fireplace! Think how that would have startled some people nowadays, and everybody a few years ago. Addison, in one of his essays on "Omens and Prognosticks," tells us that "a screech-owl at midnight has alarmed a family more than a band of robbers." Just imagine such a family putting the bird in a cage and calmly looking up particulars in a "bird-book"!

By the way, there is one real mystery about the screech-owl. Sometimes its plumage is rusty red, and at another time gray and black, and this peculiarity of color does not depend on age, sex, or season, as it does in so many other birds with which we all are familiar.

Dr. Chadbourne has proved by experimenting that "the screech-owl may pass from one phase of color to another without change of plumage." Its call is a tremulous whistle rather than screech.



A SCREECH-OWL.



"MERRY CHRISTMAS!" BY FRANK L. MACDONALD, AGE 17. (GOLD BADGE.)

Oh, Christmas, merry Christmas,  
With all your gifts and cheer,  
We wish you came 'most every day,  
Instead of every year.

HELEN STEVENS (AGE 13).

How swiftly the months go by, and how soon the year is done! To the League editor it *is* as if merry Christmas "came 'most every day," for it seems but yesterday since he was writing the holiday greetings for last year; and even those of the year before, for our first League Christmas, are only a step farther back—a week, perhaps, or a month at the farthest.

And now, here we are for the third time entering a holiday competition together. Not all together, either, for in the two years that have slipped away a goodly number of our talented ones have reached the age limit for League work, while a few—a mourned and privileged few—have set sail for that quiet haven of peace where age does not matter and the prizes of earth are left behind. Those who, because of their added years, have withdrawn their work from the League pages, and perhaps made it a part of their life aim and effort, are still eagerly watching our progress, while those others—the silent ones—will not, we believe, forget their hopes and efforts here.

We have a present for the League this time, in the form of a letter from the man whom the League editor considers to be the strongest art force in Americato-day—Howard Pyle. It is written with special reference to the young artists, but as Mr. Pyle is also an author of both prose and verse of the very highest rank, we may take whatever he says as being meant as well for the young writers of the League.

## THE ST. NICHOLAS LEAGUE FOR DECEMBER.

WILMINGTON, DEL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ST. NICHOLAS LEAGUE.

DEAR SIR: I find myself much interested in the work which you are doing in the St. Nicholas League. It is not only that I am so interested in young artists and in their efforts to produce beautiful and interesting pictures; apart from this, I enjoy studying for its own sake the honest competitive effort that the prizes which you offer through the valuable pages of your magazine stimulate. I never fail, when the ST. NICHOLAS enters the house, to turn to the leaves of the League and to look at the pictures that embellish it, wondering as to who are the boys and the girls who draw them, what they are like, what their homes are like, what are their ambitions, their desires, their aims in life. Who knows but that some great future artist, who is destined, after a while, to reach high-pinnacled altitudes, is

here essaying his first unfledged effort at flight? Who knows but that some future man of might may sometime look back to the very page of the magazine which I hold open in my hand, and may see in it his first young work that won the glory of his first young prize in life! These are the thoughts that make the pages of the League so interesting to me.

I am, besides, more personally interested in that I have a school of art of my own in Wilmington, Delaware, where I live, and where I teach a few pupils, some three or four of whom are not older than these young people of the League, and who are now starting at the very elementary beginning of their art

studies. Hence, also, I never open the pages of the League without wondering whether I may not see in it some as yet unopened flower of art that is destined to be transplanted to my own little garden.



"PRESIDENT MCKINLEY WAVING TO HIS WIFE." (SEE LEAGUE LETTER.)  
BY PEARL SCHWARTZ, AGE 14. (GOLD BADGE.)

I wish you every success in your endeavors to stimulate such young efforts in so beautiful a field of life-work, and I am,

Very sincerely yours,  
HOWARD PYLE.

## PRIZE-WINNERS, COMPETITION No. 24.

IN making the awards, contributors' ages are considered.

VERSE. Gold badges, Doris Franklyn (age 14), 15 Washington Sq., New York City, and Nancy Barnhart (age 12), 4221 Delmar Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Silver badges, Saidee E. Kennedy (age 14), Merryall, Pa., and Jessica Nelson North (age 10), Edgerton, Wis.

PROSE. Gold badges, Gladys Ralston Britton (age 15), "The Audubon,"

B'way and 39th St., New York City, and Isadore Douglas (age 13), Vintondale, Pa.

Silver badges, Elinor C. Holmes (age 14), 83 Linden St., Allston, Mass., and Florence R. Beck (age 11), 348 W. 35th St., New York City.

DRAWING. Gold badges, Frank L. MacDonald (age 17), Box 177, Parry Sound, Ont., Can., and J. Ernest Bechdolt (age 17), Box 278, Eugene, Ore.

Silver badges, Margaret J. Russell (age 13), Luray, Page Co., Va., and Samuel D. Otis (age 12), Sherwood, Cayuga Co., N. Y.

PHOTOGRAPHY. Gold badges, Pearl Schwartz (age 14), 2231 Clay St., San Francisco, Cal., and Seymour Blair (age 12), Hôtel Ritz, Place Vendôme, Paris, France.

Silver badges, J. Deems Taylor (age 15), University Heights, New York City, James S. Wroth (age 16), Cor. 5th St. and Cooper Ave., Albuquerque, N. M., and Milroy Carrie (age 9), Box 732, Owen Sound, Ont., Can.

WILD-ANIMAL AND BIRD PHOTOGRAPH. First prize, "Wild Deer," by Frederick S. Brandenburg (age 12), 22 Langdon St., Madison, Wis. Second prize, "Cinnamon Bear," by Florence Lang (age 12), 349 Hudson Ave., Chicago, Ill. No third award.

PUZZLE-MAKING. Gold badge, Antoinette Greene (age 17), 1821 7th Ave., Troy, N. Y.

Silver badge, Ernest Gregory (age 10), 8 Spring St., Marblehead, Mass., and William Ellis Keysor (age 10), 1326 S. 31st St., Omaha, Neb.

PUZZLE-ANSWERS. Gold badge, Margaret Wilkie Gilholm (age 14), 441 E. 29th St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Silver badges, Edythe R. Carr (age 12), 587 Public St., Providence, R. I., and Olive R. T. Griffin (age 11), Rockport, Mass.

Prizes are usually sent within fifteen days after the announcement of the names of prize-winners.

## WHEN WINTER COMES.

BY DORIS FRANKLYN (AGE 14).

(Gold Badge.)

DEAR birds, you seek a warmer clime  
When chilling blasts of winter blow;  
I cannot bear to part with you;  
Please tell me why you go?

They only sigh,  
And make reply,  
"Alas! It must be so."

Fair queen of flowers, sweet rose, you fade  
And die beneath the frost and snow.  
Please live! I cannot bear to think

That you no longer  
grow!

She bowed her  
head,

And sadly said,

"Alas! 'Tis ordered so."

Why should the summer's dear del-  
ights

Be forced by winter  
far to go?

My mother, tell  
me; 't is so  
sad!

I'm sure that you  
will know.

My mother  
smiled,

And said, "Dear  
child,

Some day we all shall  
know."

## "SNAP'S"

## CHRISTMAS.

BY ISADORE DOUGLAS  
(AGE 13).

(Gold Badge.)

My name is "Snap,"  
and I am a black, white,

and tan fox-terrier. I am out in the woodhouse now,  
and I want to tell you about to-day, which has been my  
first Christmas.

For a whole week I have been as good as a terrier  
pup can be,—and it seems to me that is saying a good  
deal,—for the children had told me how Santa Claus  
would bring you presents if you were good.

I could hardly get to sleep the night before Christ-  
mas, and early in the morning I woke up. Of course  
I had intended going down with the children; but I  
grew so curious to see what Santa Claus had brought  
me that I got out of my basket in master's room and  
went softly downstairs.

The tree which had grown in the parlor the day be-  
fore yesterday had blossomed in the night with glitter-  
ing silver. However, I did not look at it long, but  
began to hunt about for the things Santa had brought  
me.

First, there was a beautiful doll. I had never had a  
doll before, and I began to play with this one right  
away. But she would n't roll when I put her on the  
floor, so I began to shake her, which was great fun till  
her head dropped off, and then I left her.

Then I found a ball; but I don't like balls much when  
there is no one to roll them, so I tore it apart to see



"KING EDWARD VII. PROMENADING." BY SEYMOUR BLAIR,  
AGE 12. (GOLD BADGE.)

what was inside. It had smothery white stuffing; so I went on.

Next I came to a rubber cow. She was great fun, because I could chew her; but when I put my foot on her she squeaked, so I put her in the coal-hod.

Then I had some candy; but before I had finished it I heard the children coming, so I ran behind the tree and hid. When the door opened I quaked, for the room was all torn up, and fragments of the doll, the ball, and the candy were lying about.

"The rascal!" said master; then he saw me. After that we chased over the house for some time before he caught me. Never mind what happened next.

So here I am in the woodhouse. And I have n't a very good opinion of Christmas!



#### OUR PRESENT.

BY NANCY BARNHART  
(AGE 12).

Illustrated by the  
Author.

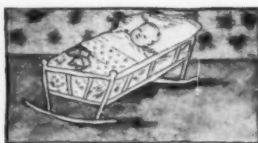
(Gold Badge.)

It was early in the morning,  
While the stars were yet in the sky,  
We awoke to the fact that 't was Christmas—  
Edward, Alice, and I.

We had as many presents  
As Sanny could make or buy;  
Our stockings were almost bursting—  
Edward, Alice, and I.

But we had one little present  
Better than all the mince-pie:  
We had a wee baby brother—  
Edward, Alice, and I.

His hands and his feet  
were so tiny;  
His eyes were as  
blue as the sky;  
We liked him the best  
of our presents—  
Edward, Alice, and  
I.

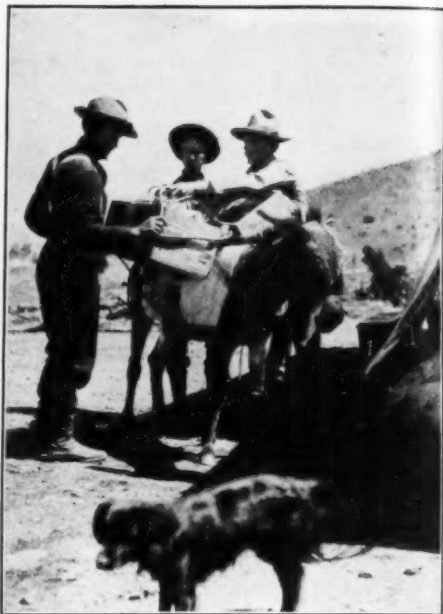


#### MILLCENT'S NEW YEAR SURPRISE.

BY ELINOR C. HOLMES (AGE 14).

(Silver Badge.)

ON the day preceding the Christmas vacation, Miss Whitney, teacher of the ninth grade, stood on the platform, wishing the scholars a merry Christmas. Millicent Robarts waited till all the others were in line, then she stepped up to the platform. Miss Whitney smiled. "You will be back after vacation, won't you?" she asked. Millicent shook her head. "Are you going to a private school?" asked the teacher, laying her hand on the girl's shoulder. Millicent nodded. "Well, good-by, then," said Miss Whitney. Millicent hastily turned away. When she got to the door Miss Whitney called, "You will come and see me, dear." Millicent had to bite her lip to keep the tears back, but she turned with an unsuccessful effort to appear smiling, and nodded her head. Without waiting for the line, she sped down the stairs and out into the open air. She walked briskly home, ran up into her room, and throwing herself on the bed, cried as though her heart would break. Her mother questioned her at the table, but she begged to be let alone. After supper she drew



"PREPARING FOR THE TRAIL." BY JAMES S. WROTH,  
AGE 16. (SILVER BADGE.)

her mother into a corner, and, sitting on the arm of her chair, told her all. Her mother spoke soothing words, and she soon felt better.

The Christmas week passed quickly, bringing pleasures that made Millicent forget her grief. But when the day came for beginning her private-school work, it returned, and she could not forget it. She entered the cloak-room, and after removing her wraps she walked gloomily along the corridor. As she neared the school-room door she felt an arm slip around her waist. She was surprised, for she knew none of the girls. She looked up, then started back. It was Miss Whitney.

"It can't be," muttered Millicent, as one in a dream. Miss Whitney smiled. "Yes, it can, dear," she said, as Millicent threw her arms about her neck. "You see, I'm not a ghost or a vision." Millicent told her how she felt that last day. "Oh! I have had many pleasant surprises, but none so delightful as this New Year surprise," she added.



BY GLADYS RALSTON BRITTON (AGE 15).

(Gold Badge. Illustrated Story.)

THE snow fell unceasingly that Christmas night. The evergreens tossed their branches as if to rid themselves of their burden, while the old oaks only groaned.



But for this, there was no sound, except the sleet hitting the glass where a solitary street-lamp lighted part of a road which led to an old-fashioned country house.

The wind blew fiercely, tearing more a ragged sign tied to the lamp-post. The writing was blurred and indistinct; the only words discernible were:

**\$100 REWARD FOR RETURN OF SET-TER DOG. STOLEN JANUARY, 1901.**

Through the raging storm struggled a dog; he stopped once or twice to sniff the air, then crept close to the lamp-post as if hoping to receive shelter.

A rope hung from his neck, and his whole appearance told of a desperate struggle for freedom.

Slowly he crept on. Would they love him still?

The snow was drifting deeper and deeper. Shivering pitiably, he reached the broad piazza, painfully dragged his benumbed limbs to the window, and placed his front paws on the sill. His deep eyes looked full of hope; surely he would be remembered!

Withalow whine, he feebly scratched the glass. One or two children turned, but thinking him a stray dog, resumed their games.

His brown eyes grew dim; his stiff paws fell from the sill: he was forgotten!

Ah, no; if he could have seen the tears that filled his little mistress's eyes, and how often she refused to join the noisy games, and the words, "Oh, Dan! this time last year! How cruel to steal you from me!" were on her lips, it would have made his dog-heart leap for joy.

On one of the many times that she sought the window she saw a dark object on the steps. Tremblingly she opened the door, and just as he was going away heartsick, he heard "Dan! Oh, my Dan!" and his mistress's arms were around his shivering body and he was borne into the house.

So kind and gentle all were to him, but to his heart none were so dear as the slender girl who still held him close and whispered: "Dan, your home-coming was not in vain, for we all still love you."

Safe from the cruel ones who stole him, and once more among his own, that weary, happy dog found love and comfort all his life.

### JACK'S JOURNEY.

BY FLORENCE R. BECK  
(AGE 11).

(Silver Badge.)

ROSIE had more dolls than either she or nurse could keep count of. Nurse cut paper dolls by the hundred, and these were very troublesome ones, for they were continually blown out of the window or into the

fire. The more substantial dollies had all lost some part of their bodies. Poor Ethel, the big wax doll, was minus a wig and an arm, Lily traveled about without a head, and Gracie and Bella had each lost an eye.

The only one that could be kept in good condition



"MOONRISE IN DECEMBER." BY J. DEEMS TAYLOR, AGE 15. (SILVER BADGE.)

was Jack, who was made of worsted. When he raveled, nurse mended him. When he lost a leg or arm, nurse sewed it on again. When he was bad, Rosie usually punished him by putting him in papa's overcoat pocket, which had hung on the hat-rack in the hall since the last cold weather.

This particular day, when Rosie was having her bath, she had seated Jack on the edge of the bath-tub, and the naughty boy had fallen into the water. After she had dried him on the heater, he was put in papa's overcoat pocket. When Mr. Raymond (papa) came home that night, he announced that as it was quite cold he would have to wear his overcoat on the next morning.

Rosie had forgotten all about poor Jack, and the next morning Mr. Raymond walked off with Jack dangling from his pocket. Down the street walked Mr. Raymond, and almost every one laughed at the queer spectacle. At the corner was a man who asked him if he was out of his baby-clothes yet. Mr. Raymond wondered what it all meant. At last a friend walked up to him, and, first asking him if he kept a toy-shop, told him that a worsted doll was sticking out of his pocket. Mr. Raymond immediately poked Jack into the depths of his inside pocket.

When Mr. Raymond got home that night, he told Mrs. Raymond of Jack's journey, and handed him over to Rosie with advice not to allow him to go on



"WASH DAY." BY MILROY CARRIE, AGE 9. (SILVER BADGE.)

such a trip again. The result was that Jack never again ventured out of the house, and Rosie has found other ways to punish him for misbehavior.

### THE DECEMBER WOODS.

BY JESSICA NELSON NORTH (AGE 10).

(Silver Badge.)

I ROAMED in the woods in winter  
When the trees were blank and bare;  
When the gusts of wind blew the snow in heaps,  
In the path of the hurrying hare.

A few leaves clung to the tree-tops,  
But those were old and brown;  
And the winter breeze shook the snowy trees,  
And blew the dead leaves down.

I gathered a bunch of ivy-leaves,  
Still bright with autumn's glow;  
I picked a cluster of berries red,  
All sprinkled with feathery snow.

I reached the hill  
above the creek;  
The snow began to  
fall;  
And thick and fast the  
wintry blast  
blew snowflakes  
over all.

I turned my footsteps  
homeward,  
Along the smooth  
worn track;  
A chipmunk hurried  
up a tree,  
With stripes upon  
his back.



"A 'WILD' MONKEY."  
BY IRENE F. WEBMORE,  
AGE 14.



"BEAR." BY FLORENCE LANG, AGE 12.  
(SECOND PRIZE, "WILD-ANIMAL  
PHOTOGRAPH.")

The dull gray clouds had parted,  
And faintly I could see  
That the early setting winter  
sun  
Was shining down on me.

### FIRELIGHT PICTURES.

BY SAIDEE E. KENNEDY  
(AGE 14).

(Silver Badge.)

IN the firelight's fitful glow  
Shadowy pictures come and go—  
Pictures that I love to see,  
For they bring sweet thoughts  
to me.

Thoughts of childhood's careless play  
In the heaps of odorous hay,  
In the fields where daisies grew,  
Freshened by the sparkling dew.



"WILD DEER." BY FREDERICK S. BRANDENBURG, AGE 12.  
(FIRST PRIZE, "WILD-ANIMAL PHOTOGRAPH.")

I can see the old homestead,  
And my little trundle-bed,  
Where I slept till morning's light  
Told me of new day's delight.

But the pictures that I see  
Are not there for you, but me;  
So I 'll hide them in my heart,  
Nevermore with them to part.

### THE TALE OF A CUCKOO CLOCK.

BY MARGARETE MÜNSTERBERG (AGE 12).

I AM sitting in my study by the open fire, and the  
old cuckoo clock is striking seven.  
Tell me, little cuckoo, do you know a story for the  
St. Nicholas League?



"NOT A WILD ANIMAL." BY KARL MANN, AGE 12.



"SAN LORENZO RIVER." BY JEAN FORGENO, AGE 12.

"Listen!" said the bird. "Far away in the Black Forest there stood a mighty oak-tree. It was rumored among the peasants that, being fairy-haunted, it would bring great luck to him who had its wood."

"When this tree was hewn down, the cutters gave the superfluous pieces of wood to young Richard, and



"A HARVESTER." BY MAY GRUENING, AGE 16.

from them he carved me and my house. I remember that as he was putting me into my abode, little Gertrude snatched me—and dropped me! Since that day I have had a little quiver in my voice.

"Soon your mother, who was traveling in Germany, bought me, to take me across the sea.

"I made this clock of the lucky tree's wood," murmured Richard, as he made me ready for sale; 'a few shillings—and that is all my luck!'

"Years have passed since then. But what do you think? Two years ago, when the full moon was shining into your study, on a cold December night like to-day, I looked through the window and saw a young man and a girl walk by your house.

"Alas!" I heard the former say, 'why did I come to this country to seek my fortune? I have no hope to find it here, and we are all alone. Let us return to



"A MOUNTAIN TOWN." BY WILLIAM WARDEN BODINE, AGE 13.

our home!" I cried my name to announce the ninth hour. Suddenly the young man turned around, and looked into this room.

"Oh, Gertrude!" he cried, 'did you hear the quiver in that cuckoo's note? Do you remember the day you dropped the bird I had carved? Surely in that upper room hangs the first clock I made.'

"He stood still, then said with emotion:

"The voice of that cuckoo is like a greeting from home. I have found a native friend in this country. Gertrude, we shall stay!"

"Since then they have passed your window many a night, and yesterday Gertrude said:

"See our good cuckoo! To him you must thank your fortune. Now a hundred laborers are working in your clock factory. The oak-tree's wood has brought you luck, after all.'"



"RING-ROUND-ROSY." BY FRANCES LEONE ROBINSON, AGE 13.

### THE CLOSING YEAR.

BY MARGUERITE BEATRICE CHILD  
(AGE 14).

THE time of mists and glowing leaves,  
October, full of joy, is past;  
And Winter with his snow and cold  
Now walketh in our midst at last.

The trees are tossing long, bare arms,  
The snow falls whirling swift to earth;  
And over all the white-clad world  
There rings the sound of children's mirth.

The wind doth sing the livelong day,  
And glad its song, and sweet, though wild;  
It telleth of a little Babe  
Of long ago, the Manger-Child.

The mem'ry of that little Child  
Brings peace and joy unto all men,  
And helps them to be good and true  
Until the Yule-tide come again.



"DECEMBER." BY PAULINE CROLL, AGE 16.

### THE CAT AND THE RAT.

BY LILLIAN HILLYER  
(AGE 9).

'T WAS a moonlight night,  
And outcame a rat;  
In looking around  
He spied a cat.

Then came a scramble,  
And then came a crash;  
A stand was knocked over  
And fell with a smash.

The pussy-cat hid  
Behind the mat;  
But no one can tell  
What became of the rat.

### POEM OF THE SEASONS.

BY HILDRETH BURTON SMITH (AGE 8).

THE trees are turning green,  
And flowers can be seen.  
Springtime is coming to us now.

The birds have left their nests  
In the oak-trees' leafy crests.

Summer-time is coming to us now.

The trees seem nearly dead,

The leaves are turning red.  
Autumn is coming to us now.



"A LITTLE JAP GIRL ON CAPE COD." BY CHARLES ALMY, JR., AGE 13.

The cedar-trees are white  
From a long snowy night.  
*Christmas-time is coming to us now.*

### WINTER.

BY OSSAN IBERG (AGE 17).  
Illustrated by the Author.



THE wind, keen; gloomy the scene;  
The snow deep and cold, the air sharp and bold;  
But remember, it's December.



"A PLEASANT SPOT." BY MARGUERITE WILLIAMS, AGE 13.

### THE MERMAID'S CHRISTMAS TREE.

BY GRACE REYNOLDS DOUGLAS (AGE 11).

(A winner of gold and silver badges.)

ILSA sat among the rocks down by the shore, gazing out at the sea.

She had left her companions because she wished to be alone to write a Christmas story.

Alas for Ilsa! She could not think of a winter story while the beautiful September sun peeped through his fleecy robes down on the clear blue ocean, and the sea-gulls were flying hither and thither, dipping their pointed wings in the whitecaps.

Her paper and pencil fell to the sands, and she nestled down, idle but happy.

As Ilsa watched a large breaker rolling in, she noticed something on its crest. It looked like a mass of seaweed. When it came nearer she saw that it was a little maiden with floating hair. She carried a large branch of coral quite close to the rock where Ilsa lay hidden from view, and then looked timidly around.

"T is a mermaid," thought Ilsa, as she gazed eagerly through the crevice of the rocks.

Planting the branch of coral in the sand, the mermaid dived down, and brought up some pink and white shells and other sea treasures.

These she tied with bits of seaweed and hung them on the coral branch.

Then she brought a cluster of pearls, which she shaped like a star and placed on the topmost twig.

"Why, she's trimming a Christmas

tree!" murmured Ilsa, clasping her hands with delight.

The mermaid now brought some little jellyfish, which she stuck on the branches of the tree; they shone in shadows like candles.

When all was finished, taking a silver shell from her girdle, she blew softly, and soon a crowd of little round objects came rolling over the sand.

"Oh, they're little sea-urchins, and this is their Christmas tree!" whispered Ilsa.

"Now, what tune shall we sing?" asked the mermaid, after she had distributed the presents to the merry little sea-urchins.

"Nep-tune! Nep-tune!" cried a chorus of wee voices.

"Neptune? Why, he's the god of the sea!" cried Ilsa, in delight, jumping up from her hiding-place.

The mermaid gave a frightened look and raised her silver shell to her lips.

Immediately a great wave came rolling in, and mermaid, sea-urchins, and Christmas tree vanished like magic.

"Come back! Come back! I did n't mean to spoil your party!" cried Ilsa; but the only reply was the moaning of the breaker, which, returning, cast at her feet the mermaid's silver shell.



"A LITTLE QUAKER." BY GERTRUDE HERBERT, AGE 15.

### PAPA TURKEY'S WARNING.

BY KATHARINE VAN DYCK (AGE 12).

"SAY, pa," said Tommy Turkey

One dark December day,  
"What makes you look so sad and thin,  
While I am fat and gay?"

"I feel as happy as can be,  
For now the cook is kind,



"MOUNTAIN SHEEP." BY LOUISE CLENDENNING SMITH, AGE 15.



And gives just twice the food to me  
That once I used to find."

"Come here, my son, while I explain:  
You're young and cannot know  
How danger, woe, and dreadful pain  
Beset a turkey so.

"I've heard your grandpap often say  
That every girl and boy  
Just dote on turkeys fat and gay,  
And pick their bones with joy.

"And so I say, beware, dear son;  
Reduce your weight, and so live on."

### THE OPEN FIRE.

BY MARGARET STEVENS  
(AGE 10).

As I sit before the open fire,  
Some thoughts do visit me  
Of brownies and the fairies  
And the mermaids of the sea.

And they stand before me wav-  
-ring,  
Then they quickly float  
away;

Soon I hear them up the chim-  
-ney,  
And this is what they say:

"Oh, we belong to the open  
fire—

A life which is gay and free;  
We pass our days in the flames  
so bright;

Oh, come, oh, come with  
me."

### ALMIRA, LOUISA, AND MARY JANE KENT.

BY MILDRED ELIZABETH JOHNSTON (AGE 12).

The father and mother had gone off to Boston,  
Being twenty-five miles by the way which they went,  
And leaving at home their three little daughters,  
Almira, Louisa, and Mary Jane Kent.

The children performed all their small household duties;  
Then, with laughter and singing and sighs of content,  
They went out of doors and sat on the green grass,  
Almira, Louisa, and Mary Jane Kent.

And then in the distance a yell smote the still air;

A horseman appeared, on his flying steed bent;  
"The Indians! The Indians are coming!" he shouted.  
"Run, Almira, Louisa, and Mary Jane Kent!"

The children stood stock-still, bereft of their senses;  
Those terrible moments they came and they went;  
Then all of a sudden their senses came to them.

"To the hall! to the passage!" cried Mary Jane Kent.

They opened the trap-door,—it creaked on its hinges,—  
And down the dark steps of the passage they went,  
With a prayer in each heart for God to deliver  
Almira, Louisa, and Mary Jane Kent.

The Indians came on with dancing and singing;

They burned the old house, and to ashes it went;  
But the children escaped through an underground  
passage—

Almira, Louisa, and Mary Jane Kent.



"FROM LIFE." BY J. ERNEST BECHDOLT, AGE 17. (GOLD BADGE.)

### CHRISTMAS IN OTHER LANDS.

BY WILLIAM BEUKMA (AGE 15).

It would perhaps be interesting to  
hear how people in other lands celebrate  
Christmas.

In England, Christmas is celebrated at  
the present time much the same as here;  
but before the Commonwealth they spent  
Christmas very merrily.

Each family procured the largest log  
they could, and on Christmas Eve it was  
dragged into the house and lighted. It  
was called the Yule log, and it was consid-  
ered a bad omen if it went out before  
it was consumed.

About a week be-  
fore Christmas the  
men of the family  
went out to hunt a  
boar, for this animal  
was very common in  
England then, and  
one was brought home  
in time for the feast  
on Christmas.

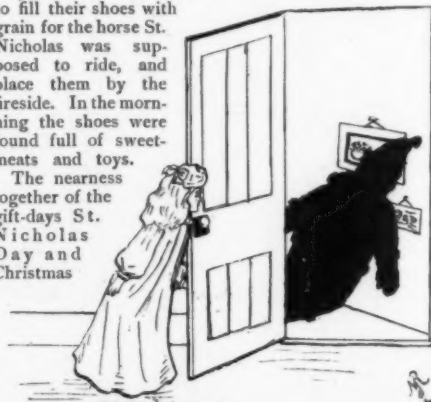
The head of the  
boar was served gar-  
nished with lemons,  
and only a brave man  
was considered fit to  
carve it. The day  
was finished with  
merrymaking.

These cus-  
toms died out  
under the stern  
laws of the  
Puritans until  
no traces re-  
mained.

In the Catholic countries, Spain, France, Italy, and  
Austria, Christmas is solemnly celebrated in the  
churches. In some Austrian towns they have a custom  
of placing lighted candles in their windows to give light  
for the Christ Child.

In Holland, on the eve of December 6 (St. Nicholas  
Day), the children used  
to fill their shoes with  
grain for the horse St.  
Nicholas was sup-  
posed to ride, and  
place them by the  
fireside. In the morn-  
ning the shoes were  
found full of sweet-  
meats and toys.

The nearness  
together of the  
gift-days St.  
Nicholas  
Day and  
Christmas



"WHO IS IT?" BY MARGARET J. RUSSELL, AGE 13.  
(SILVER BADGE.)



"OUR OLD SHOP." BY SAMUEL D. OTIS, AGE 12. (SILVER BADGE.)

caused them to be merged into one, and both were celebrated on Christmas Day. So St. Nicholas became associated with Christmas.

In Sweden, a sheaf of wheat is placed outside the door for the birds, and in some places a cake of meal is placed outside for the Christ Child.

#### DECEMBER.

BY ELSIE N. GUTMAN  
(AGE 14).

"SEE, the snow is falling fast;  
Come out, sis, and play.  
Do not poke up in the house;  
Come out, come, I say.

"Now the sun is shining fine,—  
Come out quickly, girl,—  
And the sleighing is divine;  
O'er the snow we'll whirl."

Sister did not hear a word  
(She's of the League a member),  
For her mind was occupied

With ST. NICK for December.



"THE OLD CLOCK ON THE STAIRS."  
BY RALPH E. DYAR, AGE 17.

#### WINTER BUTTERFLIES.

BY ALLEINE LANGFORD (AGE 13).

BUTTERFLIES are coming, coming from the sky;  
They are soft and fluffy—see how fast they fly.  
They are coming faster, lighting everywhere.  
Oh, how fast they're coming, flying through the air!  
Now they're blocking highways, lighting on the trees;  
Then they fly or flutter softly in the breeze.  
They have made a cover for the plants and grass,  
Lighting on the housetops quickly as they pass.  
Can you quickly guess, now, what are these butterflies?  
They are tiny snowflakes falling from the skies.

#### THE ROBIN'S CHRISTMAS.

BY MARGUERITE ASPINWALL (AGE 13).

THE snow had been falling all night, and in the morning the sun had come out, making everything sparkle brilliantly. All the people in the houses came to the windows. "What a beautiful Christmas!" they would say, and later they would appear muffled in furs and buffalo robes and go for long sleigh-rides, returning with red noses and ears, to hurry into the house exclaiming, "How bitterly cold it is to-day!" Now all this was very well for people who had buffalo robes and warm houses, but for the poor little cold and hungry robin on the lawn the case was very different. He had quite despaired of finding a worm, for he had been hunting all morning without success. But worms do not love the snow; and yet he was so hungry!

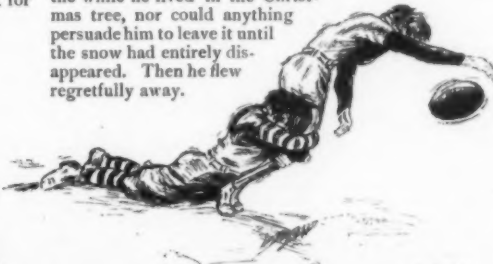
The cold increased. The robin settled down on a dead twig outside the window of a large house. Inside he could see a blazing fire, and in one corner of the room a fir-tree twinkled with candles and toys. Every one was warm and happy in there. They had plenty to eat, and need not mind the cold.

He left his perch and hopped upon the window-ledge, and huddled in a corner, shivering. Suddenly the window opened and a pretty little girl looked out. "Oh, you poor, cold, hungry robin!" she cried pityingly;



"BRINGING IN THE SADDLE HERD." BY EDWARD A. GILBERT, AGE 11.

and taking him gently in her hands, she carried him into the room, and shut the window. She took him to the fire, and gave him a nice meal of bread-crumbs, and then let him fly about. He was very friendly and grateful, and after flying around the room he alighted—where do you think?—on the topmost branch of the Christmas tree, where he remained very happily all day, looking gravely about him. He stayed in the house for two days, until the snow had gone, and all the while he lived in the Christmas tree, nor could anything persuade him to leave it until the snow had entirely disappeared. Then he flew regretfully away.



"A GOOD TACKLE." BY WALTER I. DOTHARD, AGE 16.

## THE ROLL OF HONOR.

A LIST of those whose work has been found worthy of honorable mention and encouragement.

## VERSE.

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Hildegard Allen  
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Belle Schonwasser

## LEAGUE NOTES AND LETTERS.

This is a photograph month. More good photographs have been received than ever before (with the exception of wild-animal pictures), and some that we use are unusually remarkable. For instance, we have one of the King of England taking a walk, as unprotected as any citizen; and, what is still more interesting, we have a special picture of our own late lamented and honored President. The following letter, which accompanied the photograph, explains how this picture was taken:

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: When President McKinley was out here he lived right on the opposite corner from us and I had a very good chance to see him. I shook hands with him three times, and he spoke to me twice. I have a very good picture of him that I took myself with a kodak, and I am sending it to you. It represents the President waving to his sick wife as he was leaving for a drive. She was up for the first time and at the window. I am fourteen years old.

Yours truly,  
PEARL SCHWARTZ.

Marguerite M. Hillery, a very old friend, says that all her friends take ST. NICHOLAS. Miss Hillery would like us to resume our "Gems from Young Poets" which used to be a part of the League. We will do so gladly as soon as we can get a little more room.

A lady writes to the League to suggest that one of the League aims should be courtesy and good manners. In England there is a Children's National Guild of Courtesy, which is said to be accomplishing great good. Certainly a like organization would not be out of place in America, and the St. Nicholas League members, if they live up to its ideals of nobler living, can hardly fail to be gentle and courteous in their deportment. Hence, those who wish to do so may, if they like, give to the League a subtitle of "A Society for the Development of Kindness, Courtesy, and Talent."

Doris Webb, an old friend and prize-winner, sends a clever and ingenious ST. NICHOLAS alphabet.

## THE ST. NICHOLAS ALPHABET.

BY DORIS WEBB (AGE 16).

A's for the Articles — read by all ages,  
B's "Books and Reading" — most popular pages,  
C's for the Children who read it so oft,  
D's their Delight when it's flourished aloft,  
E's for the Elves — inside without doubt,  
F's for the Fairies who often peep out,  
G's the Gold Badge — most earnestly sought,  
H is for History — pleasantly taught,  
I's Illustrations — most lovely to see,  
J's for the Jingles — as gay as can be,  
K's useful Knowledge — so easily gained,  
L's for the League — its success has not waned,  
M's for its Motto of learning and living,  
N's "Nature and Science," much interest giving,  
O's for Old numbers, now treasured with care,  
P's for the Poems we find here and there,  
Q's for our Questions when we "want to know,"  
R's for the Riddles that puzzle us so,  
S for ST. NICHOLAS — long may it last!  
T's for its Tales of the present and past,  
U's for its Union of study and play,  
V's former Volumes, in battered array,  
W's Winner of badges or mention,  
X is for Excellence, sure of attention,  
Y is for Young People — all of them need it,  
Z's for the Zeal of the children to read it.

Other entertaining and complimentary letters have been received from Louisa Wardrope, Dagmar Florence Cufel, Hugo Graf, Lucy S. Robinson, John Seley, John R. Boyd, Benjamin F. McGuckin, Anne Kress, Florence Rust, Benjamin F. Burch (with copy of the "Philatelic Era," a bright paper), Margaret Miller Burnham, Imogene Bastique Pierce, Bessie Marshall, Vera Matson, David M. Cheney, Ralph P. Blackledge (too long — cannot use material of this sort), Yvonne Jequier (with suggestion for a League for members over 18), Frederick S. Brandenburg, John A. Ross, H. H. D. Klinker, Anna L. James (with picture), Jean Olive Heck, Margaret Marsh, Wendell R. Morgan, Bertha Carmen Herbst, Curtis Hoppin, Nance (with long letter on the Philippines — too long), Theodora Kimball, and with pictures from Hugh Melvin, Lovering Hill, and Gordon Burton Smith.



BY BETH HOWARD, AGE 14.

## CHAPTERS.

OWING to the great number of contributions received this month, and the many good ones selected for use, we have been obliged to condense our chapter report. All the chapters are prospering, and many new ones are forming. These will be reported as rapidly as possible.

## A FEW OF THE NEW CHAPTERS.

- No. 361. "Valentine Chapter." Anna White, Secretary; eight members. Address, Box 174, Lansdowne, Pa.  
No. 362. "Merry Six." Anna Smith, President; Marjory Marsh, Secretary; six members. Address, Decorah, Ia.  
No. 363. "Cyclone City Club." Mary Sanders, President; Marie Regan, Secretary; eight members. Address, Southwest St., Grinnell, Ia.  
No. 364. "Jolly Six." Alice Rogers, President; Beatrice Weeks, Secretary; six members. Address, Grove St., Barre, Mass.  
No. 365. "Clover Leaf." Three members. Address, 824 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, N. Y.  
No. 366. Louisa Hodge, President; Charlotte Hodge, Secretary; three members. Address, 316 W. 108th St., New York City.  
No. 367. "Family Chapter." Eva Neill, President; James Neill, Secretary; four members. Address, La Grande, Ore.  
No. 368. W. Barclay Doron, President; John Ross, Secretary; six members. Address, 311 E. 14th St., Davenport, Ia.  
No. 369. "The Beavers." Florence Turner, President; Helen Conolly, Secretary; five members. Address, Brockville, Ont., Can.

## PRIZE COMPETITION No. 27.

THE St. Nicholas League awards gold and silver badges each month for the best poems, stories, drawings, photographs, puzzles, and puzzle-answers.

A SPECIAL CASH PRIZE. To any League member who has won a gold badge for any of the above-named achievements, and shall again win first place, a cash prize of five dollars will be awarded, instead of another gold badge.

Competition No. 27 will close December 15 (for foreign members December 20). The awards will be announced and prize contributions published in ST. NICHOLAS for March.

VERSE. To contain not more than twenty-four lines, and may be illustrated, if desired, with not more than two drawings or photographs by the author. Subject to contain the word "hope" or "hopes."

PROSE. Story, article, or play of not more than four hundred words. It may be illustrated, if desired, with not more than two drawings by the author. Subject, "My Narrow Escape," and must be a true story. May be humorous or serious.

PHOTOGRAPH. Any size, mounted or unmounted, but no blue prints or negatives. Subject, "Chilly Days."

DRAWING. India ink, very black writing-ink, or wash (not color). Subject, "Sketched from Life." May be landscape or interior, with or without figures.

PUZZLE. Any sort, the answer to contain some word or words relating to the March season.

PUZZLE-ANSWERS. Best, neatest, and most complete set of answers to puzzles in this issue of ST. NICHOLAS.

WILD-ANIMAL OR BIRD PHOTOGRAPH. To encourage the pursuing of game with a camera instead of a gun. For the best photograph of a wild animal or bird, taken in its natural home: First Prize, five dollars and League gold badge. Second Prize, three dollars and League gold badge. Third Prize, League gold badge.

## ADVERTISING COMPETITION No. 9.

A REPORT of this competition with a list of prize-winners will be found on advertising page 9.

## RULES FOR ALL COMPETITIONS.

EVERY contribution of whatever kind must bear the name, age, and address of the sender, and be indorsed as "original" by parent, teacher, or guardian, who must be convinced beyond doubt that the contribution is not copied, but wholly the work of the sender. If prose, the number of words should also be added. These things must not be on a separate sheet, but on the contribution itself — if a manuscript, on the upper margin; if a picture, on the margin or back. Write or draw on one side of the paper only. A contributor may send but one contribution a month — not one of each kind, but one only. Members are not obliged to contribute every month. Address all communications:

THE ST. NICHOLAS LEAGUE,  
Union Square, New York.

## THE LETTER-BOX.

BERKELEY, CAL.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I would like to tell you about the Cozy Nook Club. Last summer some of us boys decided to have a club-house in a tree. The boys in the club were Russell, Roland, Pier, John, Marshall, Sheldon, Lair, and Stephen (myself). We chose a tree to build the house in, and gathered up some lumber. Then we began building. First we put some beams across the branches, and laid the floor on them. John had some pieces of a shed-roof that he gave us, and we pulled them up into the tree by ropes, and we had a hard time doing it, too. We bought some shingles, and soon had the roof shingled to keep the rain out. Then our lumber was used up, and we had no money to buy some more; so we had a circus and made two dollars on it, and bought enough lumber to finish the house, and we are working on it now. The house is seventeen feet long, and six or seven feet wide. This is the kind of flag we have:

C. N.

1900. H. I. T.

Our colors  
are blue,  
red, and  
brown.

Good-by, from

STEPHEN FIELD CHRISTY.

P. S. I will write some more in a few months about the Cozy Nook Club. I got ST. NICHOLAS last Christmas, and I was very much pleased. Roland is my chum, and Russell is my cousin.

FORT GRANT, ARIZONA.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: I am an army girl and I travel around a great deal. Year before last I was in Cuba, and I stayed there a year and a half.

Often we would have a cloud-burst.

Last year papa was ordered away to Fort Grant, Arizona. There is an Apache Indian camp a half a mile from the post, and I see a great many Indians.

They make some of the most beautiful baskets and ollas I ever saw.

We have a great many Navajo rugs that we sent to Fort Wingate, New Mexico, for.

They are made by the Navajo Indians.

The post is situated at the foot of the Graham Mountains.

Sincerely,

MARGUERITE COLE.

MANCHESTER.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: As an English reader of your magazine I am interested in the letters concerning the Cromwell monuments. I believe that until last year the statue in Manchester was the only monument to Cromwell in England. Your correspondent in the July number gave a splendid description of the statue, but there was a slight mistake as to the name of the nearest station. There are two stations quite near, Victoria and Exchange; but Oxford Road is almost on the outskirts of the city. In the early part of last year a statue was put up in London. It is near the Houses of Parliament, in front of the old Westminster Hall. Cromwell is represented with a scroll in his hand, and wearing a

costume similar to that of the statue in Manchester. He stands upon a granite pedestal, at the foot of which is carved a recumbent lion. The statue faces Westminster Abbey.

I have never written to you before, but I thought that your readers would perhaps like to hear about the Cromwell monuments from one who has seen them both. I take a great interest in ST. NICHOLAS, and enjoy the stories very much indeed. I think that the serial "A Boy of a Thousand Years Ago" was splendid, and I am very fond of all historical tales. Wishing you every success, I am,

Yours very truly,

A "MANCHESTRIAN."

PARIS.

DEAR ST. NICHOLAS: My sisters have taken you for years and liked you very much. Now they are grown up, and I am taking you, and I enjoy all the stories very much. I especially liked "Quicksilver Sue," "Betty," and "Trinity Bells." I like the continued stories best.

My home is in Cleveland, Ohio, but we are all spending the winter in Paris. We have seen many interesting things. We have seen Napoleon's tomb, the Pantheon, Notre Dame, and many other places, but I like the little Church of St.-Etienne the best.

The other day we saw "Robinson Crusoe" given as a French play. It was very different from the real story. In the play, Robinson Crusoe was married and had a little boy. His little boy was fishing one day, and found in the mouth of one fish a piece of paper which Robinson Crusoe had written on the island, telling where he was and asking for help. Then Mrs. Crusoe sent an expedition which found him. Robinson Crusoe looked just as he does in pictures, with his big umbrella and funny fur cap, and his leggings made of skin. He had a real parrot, a sheep, and a dog on the stage.

Christmas Eve he went to sleep in his hut and dreamed of his home, and the scene changed and you could see what he was dreaming about.

On Christmas Eve here in Paris we went to midnight mass at St.-Sulpice. The church is very old and large. It was very crowded. We went an hour beforehand and only got seats near the back of the church. The church was lighted with a great many candles, and just before twelve a large star of red and pale yellow lights came out over the altar. At twelve o'clock the bells rang and the two organs began to play, first one and then the other, and the choir-boys sang Christmas carols. We all enjoyed it very much.

I am going to a French school here, where the children speak only French. We play in the Luxembourg gardens for an hour every day. The children here play mostly with green tops, which they hit with a stick to make go. I have one, but cannot make it go well.

The boys here wear funny little black aprons, and some wear wooden shoes; they make a great noise.

I have been down the Seine in a little boat, and have seen the Exposition buildings which are on both sides of the river and are very beautiful, but were not half finished then. Our French cook's husband worked on the roof of the United States Building.

I enjoy the ST. NICHOLAS more than ever, here in Paris, because I have no other English books to read.

From your twelve-year-old reader,

EDITH L. CUTTER.











FROM A PORTRAIT PAINTED BY ADELAIDE COLE CHASE.

"SARAH."